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**YHWH OF HOSTS RULES ON MOUNT ZION:
LITERARY COHESION IN ISAIAH 24–27**

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Ph.D. Hebrew and Old Testament Studies
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I, Hannah E. Clardy, declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, for any other degree. Except where it states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

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Abstract

Isaiah 24–27, the so-called "Isaiah Apocalypse," is a striking section in the book of Isaiah—from its opening depiction of cosmic upheaval, to the death of *Mot*, to the summoning blast of the *shofar*. Its heightened, almost feverish, visions of "that day" are interspersed with lyrical sections ranging from jubilant praise to anguished lament. This distinctive alternation in genre, tone, and content, often without conjunctive discourse markers, contributes to a sense of disorientation that has long plagued interpreters. This synchronic study of Isa 24–27 addresses the related problems of the text's structure and coherence. It asks how Hebrew poetry, in particular Isa 24–27, indicates literary connectedness and what effect attending to these connections has for understanding Isa 24–27. To answer these questions, the study adapts tools from text linguistics and the work of Michael Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan to examine cohesive ties in Isa 24–27. The thesis argues that Isa 24–27 is best understood as a series of announcements about the rule of YHWH, each followed by a different response(s). Although there is a wide variety of cohesive relations within the text, they all contribute to the dominant theme of the kingship of YHWH.

Part I establishes the context for the study, beginning with a survey of existing research (Chapter 1). The survey finds that, despite growing appreciation for the literary (e.g. poetic, metaphorical, and intertextual) features of Isa 24–27, there remains considerable disagreement about the "unity" or coherence of this passage as a text in its own right. Chapter 2 introduces the project's aims, then defines and illustrates literary cohesion in a variety of prose and poetic texts. Chapter 3 proposes a macrostructure for Isa 24–27, which unfolds in three non-chronological movements.

Part II analyses Isa 24–27 along literary cohesive lines, taking each of the three movements in turn. Chapter 4 deals with Movement 1 (24:1–25:5) and considers the relationship between the eschatological prophecy and responsive hymn. Chapters 5–6 discuss Movement 2 (25:6–26:21), which similarly describes the nature of YHWH's rule. However, the response within this movement incorporates lament concerning an apparent disparity between the prophetic word and the community's experience. Chapter 7 traces cohesion across the final movement (27:1–13) and argues that, despite its use of several different metaphors, it unfolds similarly to the previous movements (announcement–response). This final response is neither song nor lament, but a theological argument for the community's difficulties.

Part III synthesises the findings of the study and examines more closely the major themes of Isa 24–27 and their relationship with the book of Isaiah. Although each

movement contains unique elements and distinct imagery (e.g. dimmed luminaries in Movement 1, birth imagery in Movement 2, and slain Leviathan in Movement 3), the composition is nonetheless united by a number of cohesive ties that span the whole passage. Chapter 8 explores the significance of the major cohesive ties of Isa 24–27: temporal perspective; the unnamed cities; death, life, and new creation; and the rule of YHWH. The thesis concludes with implications of the study (Chapter 9). Although the structure and unifying principles of Isa 24–27 are not consistent with modern literary ideals (e.g. chronology or syllogism), this discourse nonetheless expresses a coherent structure and semantic unity in its claim that YHWH rules the cosmos from Mount Zion and will one day create the world anew.

Lay Summary

Isaiah 24–27 has often been called the "Isaiah Apocalypse" because of its dramatic imagery and similarity to books like Daniel and Revelation. In fact, one of the most well-known verses from this section of Isaiah is quoted in the book of Revelation, which speaks of God wiping away the tears from every face (Isa 25:8//Rev 21:4). These striking chapters of Isaiah describe the coming universal reign of YHWH, the God of Israel. They describe two very different fates on that day—utter defeat for the prideful and complete restoration for the trusting.

However, interspersed within the prophetic visions of this future day are several sections that do not fit into such a simple paradigm. These sections range from jubilant praise to anguished lament, and their relationship to the prophetic announcements is not immediately apparent. This study of Isa 24–27 addresses the related problems of the text's structure and coherence. It asks how Hebrew poetry, in particular Isa 24–27, signals literary "connectedness" and what effect attending to these connections has for understanding the complex composition of Isa 24–27. To answer these questions, the study adapts tools from linguistics, particularly the concept of *literary cohesion*.

The thesis argues that Isa 24–27 is best understood as a series of announcements about the future rule of YHWH, each followed by a different response(s). Although there is a wide variety of cohesive relations within the composition, they all contribute to the dominant theme of the kingship of YHWH. Part I (Chapters 1–3) provides context for the analysis by surveying past research on Isa 24–27, discussing the "cohesion" method, and providing a working structure for the text. Part II (Chapters 4–7) offers a close reading of Isa 24–27, focusing on the many literary connections within each movement—from repeated words like "city" to the continuity of metaphorical language of Israel as a vineyard. And finally, Part III (Chapters 8–9) synthesises the findings of the study and examines more closely the major themes of Isa 24–27 and the function of these chapters within the book of Isaiah. These include the temporal perspective of the composition; the significance of the "city" motif; the interwoven themes of death, life, and new creation; and the rule of YHWH. The thesis concludes with reflections on the composition's literary genre and reading Isa 24–27 within its wider literary context.

Although the structure and unifying principles of Isa 24–27 are not always consistent with modern literary ideals (e.g. chronology or syllogism), this prophetic discourse nonetheless expresses a coherent structure and semantic unity in its claim that, in spite of present difficulties (and even *through* them), YHWH will one day recreate the cosmos and rule over it from Mount Zion.

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INTRODUCTION

If one imagines a representative line of biblical prophecy, one might think of a judgment oracle like Amos 5:18, "Woe to you who desire the day of YHWH," a salvation oracle like Hos 14:6, "I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall bloom like the lily," or perhaps an oracle against a foreign nation like Tyre (Isa 23:1). One might also imagine a story about the prophet, like Jeremiah's rescue from the cistern (Jer 38:1–13) or the strange sign-acts of Ezekiel (e.g. Ezek 4:4–8).

Within this rich diversity of literary style in the prophets, there are literary forms less often associated with prophecy. Attentive readers of Isaiah have long noted the book's use of wisdom language in expressions like "Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) are all who wait upon [YHWH]" (Isa 30:18; cf. 56:2), which uses a traditional proverbial formula.¹ The book of Isaiah also incorporates psalms, including those which conclude the first main section of the book (Isa 1–12):

Sing to YHWH, for he has done glorious things;
make this known in all the earth!
Shout and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel!
(Isa 12:5–6)

This hymnic verse, although found in a prophetic book, has features of a hymn of praise and is, in form-critical terms, a psalm. However one interprets these songs, they are rather neatly contained in ch. 12.

¹ The question of wisdom influence and the use of sapiential language in the book of Isaiah has prompted considerable research; cf. John Goldingay, "Proverbs and Isaiah 1–39," in *Reading Proverbs Intertextually*, ed. Katharine Dell and Will Kynes (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 49–64; J. Cheryl Exum, "Whom Will He Teach Knowledge?: A Literary Approach to Isaiah 28," in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature*, ed. David J.A. Clines, et al. (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), 108–39; Joseph Jensen, *The Use of Tōrā by Isaiah: His Debate with the Wisdom Tradition*, CBQS 3 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1973); and William Whedbee, *Isaiah and Wisdom* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971).

Hymns of praise are also found in Isa 24–27. However, unlike songs embedded in narratives (e.g. Deut 32:1–43 and Judg 5), which usually situate the lyrical unit with a prose introduction, and unlike the hymns of Isa 12, which are contained within a single concluding section, the hymns of Isa 24–27 are interspersed throughout a larger literary section.² The juxtaposition of oracular material with "lyrics" creates a sort of literary mosaic, which in addition to other generic forms like lament, uniquely characterises Isa 24–27 and contributes to a "disorienting effect" or "'fragmented' impression" so often described by readers of these chapters.³ This vacillation between the contrasting generic types has led to significant exegetical difficulty for these chapters of Isaiah and remains a puzzling element which touches many approaches to its interpretation.

Yet, despite this apparent lack of literary unity within Isa 24–27, the overwhelming consensus is these four chapters nonetheless constitute a section within the book of Isaiah. Perhaps more than any other section of the book, chs. 24–27 are spoken of as a unit, even their own subcorpus.⁴ Is the "Isaiah Apocalypse," as Isa 24–27 has often been called, simply a utilitarian way to identify a series of chapters that do not fit anywhere else in the book's structure? Or are there ways in

² The prose introductory clauses clearly situate the embedded songs within a narrative context. For example, the Song of the Sea is connected to the preceding narrative by the introduction: "Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song (שירה) to YHWH . . ." (Exod 15:1). A similar prose statement introduces the Song of Moses: "And Moses spoke in the hearing of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song (שירה), until they were finished" (Deut 31:30).

³ Hendrik Jan Bosman, "Syntactic Cohesion in Isaiah 24–27," in *Studies in Isaiah 24–27, The Isaiah Workshop-De Jesaja Werkplaats*, ed. Hendrik Jan Bosman and Harm van Grol et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 34.

⁴ Otto Plöger, for example, comments that "the 'Isaiah-Apocalypse' occupies a clearly marked, distinctive position" in Isaiah and constitutes a "little book . . . resting on a distinctive development" (*Theocracy and Eschatology*, trans. S. Rudman [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968], 53–54). Nonetheless, Plöger considers Isa 24–27 to have "two independent parts" [chs. 24–26 and ch. 27] (75).

which the four chapters cohere that can help explain the sense of unity that many readers intuit?

This thesis explores the related questions of the structure and coherence of Isa 24–27. It goes past the *prima facie* evidence of "unity" and uses tools from literary criticism to read Isa 24–27, identifying its unifying features, often noted in cursory fashion, and assessing their role in signalling connectedness across the chapters. It asks what kinds of literary connectedness obtain in these four chapters, what Brown and Yule call "principles of connectivity which bind a text together and force co-interpretation."⁵ While this analysis will benefit from the contributions of historical criticism and other methodological approaches, the goal is to offer a synchronic reading that is less interested in the production of the text over time and more interested in its consumption as a literary whole. The focus will be those elements within Isa 24–27 that stretch *across* disjunctive boundaries and shed light on the reasons that these four remarkable chapters have been considered a major section within the book of Isaiah. It will entertain the possibility that ancient writers and tradents may not have conceptualised literary coherence or "textuality" in the same ways as modern Western readers.

⁵ Gillian Brown and George Yule, *Discourse Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 190.

PART I

RESEARCH LANDSCAPE AND METHOD

He will raise [them] up, the one who brings to life the dead of his people [*vacat*]
And we will give thanks and declare to you the righteous acts of the Lord . . .

—The "Messianic Apocalypse"¹

¹ 4Q521 7, 6–7 (from transcription by Émile Puech, *DJD* XXV).

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH LANDSCAPE

1. Introduction

This chapter will survey the history of research of Isa 24–27 in order to demonstrate the need for the present study and situate it within the context of existing scholarly work.¹ It will begin by tracing the major interpretive questions in the early critical study of these chapters within the wider trends in prophetic studies. Many Isaiah scholars have focused research on the historical situation(s) in which Isa 24–27 originated or the process through which it came into its final redaction. The passage has also been important in discussions of the development of apocalyptic literature, beliefs about the afterlife, and the changing social dynamics of the post-exilic period. However, in the past half century, following the rise of literary critical methods like New Criticism, research has also focused on the literary dynamics of Isa 24–27 like metaphor and intertextuality. Because this thesis falls within a broadly "literary" approach to the text, the second part of this chapter will focus on the developments in prophetic criticism which contribute to the appreciation of Isa 24–27 as literature, as well as on areas of ongoing debate.

¹ For additional surveys of research, see William Barker, *Isaiah's Kingship Polemic: An Exegetical Study in Isaiah 24–27* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 1–16; J. Todd Hibbard, *Intertextuality in Isaiah 24–27: The Reuse and Evocation of Earlier Texts and Traditions* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 20–36; Brian Doyle, *The Apocalypse of Isaiah Metaphorically Speaking: A Study of the Use, Function and Significance of Metaphors in Isaiah 24–27* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 11–45; and Dan Johnson, *From Chaos to Restoration: An Integrative Reading of Isaiah 24–27*, JSOTSup 61 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 11–17.

2. A Historical Sketch of Isaiah 24–27 Scholarship

2.1. Early Voices

Early prophetic criticism was concerned in large part with the search for the historical prophets. This quest sought to determine which parts of the prophetic book could be traced back to the prophet himself, in our case Isaiah of Jerusalem.² Such assessments of "authenticity" tended to value earlier texts and relegate later ones to a less important (and less interesting) status of later ("*unecht*") additions or "intrusive glosses."³ This early critical search for the authentic prophetic word, although revised and updated long ago, nonetheless had two major implications for subsequent study of Isa 24–27. First, because many scholars considered chs. 24–27 to be among the latest material to be incorporated into the Isaiah literary tradition, the interpretation of these chapters was detached from the political, historical, and literary contexts from which the "authentic" Isaianic material arose.⁴ The composition has a reputation for being difficult to situate historically, and without the assumption of an eighth-century context, scholars have proposed dates across seven centuries: the eighth,⁵

² In 1915, George Robinson summed up the "present state of the question" of critical study of Isaiah as "confusing." He divided scholarly opinion between the "moderates" and the "radicals" and calculated that the former group accepted some twenty-two chapters as "genuine," and the later only about 262 verses ("Isaiah," *ISBE*, vol. 3 [Chicago: Howard-Severance, 1915], 1505).

³ E.g. G.B. Gray speaks of expansions in Isa 25:1–5 as the "intrusion of glosses," and sees "no way of bringing them into the scheme of the poem, or giving them any intelligible meaning as part of it" ("Critical Discussions: Isaiah 2:6; 25:1–5; 34:12–14," *ZAW* 31 [1911], 117, 118).

⁴ Bernhard Duhm popularised the "apocalypse" label for Isa 24–27, stating that "das Orakel ist durchaus Apokalypse, zu deren Erklärung man die sibyllinischen Bücher, Daniel, Henoch u.s.w. nicht missen kann" (*Das Buch Jesaja*, 2nd ed. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1902], 143). Although Duhm popularised much of Isaiah research in the late nineteenth-century, he was by no means the first to assign a post-exilic date to Isa 24–27. For a selective overview of critical Isaiah research pre-Duhm, cf. Richard Shultz, "The Origins and Basic Arguments of the Multi-Author View of the Composition of Isaiah: Where Are We Now and How Did We Get Here?" in *Bind up the Testimony: Explorations in the Genesis of the Book of Isaiah*, ed. Daniel Block and Richard Schultz (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2015), esp. 17–27.

⁵ Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 2007), 408–10; John H. Hays and Stuart A. Irvine, *Isaiah the Eighth-Century Prophet* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 295–9; John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 1–39*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986); A.H. van Zyl, "Isaiah 24–27: Their

seventh,⁶ sixth,⁷ fifth,⁸ fourth,⁹ third,¹⁰ and second centuries B.C.E.¹¹ The remarkably vague quality of the text as it pertains to historical details lends itself to multiple interpretations of its historical setting, and one suspects that prior commitments to the date and compositional history of the book weigh heavily in these judgments. Recent studies devoted to establishing the date of Isa 24–27 show no signs of consensus in this regard.¹²

A second repercussion of the search for the authentic prophetic word was a general indifference toward the literary context of Isa 24–27. Because of the chapters' cosmic imagery and eschatological focus, perhaps especially the resurrection statement (26:19), they were isolated as "The Isaiah Apocalypse." The association with apocalyptic has been an important factor in the study of Isa 24–27, and even though the consensus has now shifted to "proto" or "early-apocalyptic," the

Date of Origin," in *New Light on Some Old Problems: Papers Read at the 5th Meeting Held at University of South Africa, Pretoria, 30 January–2 February 1962*, ed. A.H. van Zyl (Potchefstroom: Pro Rege, 1962), 44–57.

⁶ Christopher Hays, "Make Peace with Me: The Josianic Origins of Isaiah 24–27," *Int* 73.2 (2019), 143–57; J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 306–7.

⁷ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 348; Johnson, *Chaos*, 16–17; William R. Millar, *Isaiah 24–27 and the Origin of Apocalyptic* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 61, 117.

⁸ R.E. Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 199–200.

⁹ Rudolf Smend, "Anmerkungen zu Jes. 24–27," *ZAW* 4 (1884), 161–224.

¹⁰ Konrad Schmid, "The Book of Isaiah," in *T&T Clark Handbook of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Literature, Religion, and History of the Old Testament*, ed. J.C. Gertz et al. (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 414; Otto Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, trans. S. Rudman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968 [1st ed. 1959], 77–78).

¹¹ Duhm, *Jesaia*, 143–44; Gray: "The difficulty . . . is not to decide whether we are dealing with a pre-exilic or a post-exilic work, but to see how any part of prophetic canon can be late enough to contain them" (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah, I–XXVII*, ICC [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912], 399–400).

Cf. Barker's date chart in *Isaiah's Kingship Polemic*, 5.

¹² While many scholars currently hold to a post-exilic date, there has recently been a resurgence of arguments for a pre-exilic date, e.g. Christopher Hays, *The Origins of Isaiah 24–27: Josiah's Festival Scroll for the Fall of Assyria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), and Hays's earlier essay "The Date and Message of Isaiah 24–27 in Light of Hebrew Diachrony," in *Formation and Intertextuality in Isaiah 24–27*, ed. J. Todd Hibbard and Hyun Chul Paul Kim (Atlanta: SBL, 2013), 7–24; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 306.

association remains. Ronald Clements's statement represents the current general consensus for the genre of Isa 24–27: the chapters “represent an important stage of hermeneutical development between prophecy and apocalyptic and thus form a bridge between the prophetic books of the Old Testament and the later apocalypses of the intertestamental period.”¹³ In addition to the connection with apocalyptic literature, the chapters' mixed generic contents prompted some scholars to rearrange the passages within Isa 24–27 to explain their diachronic reconstructions, or sometimes simply to discuss the units by genre without recourse to diachrony.¹⁴ The consequence was thus to consider other possible contexts besides the literary context of the passage. Duhm considered Isa 24–27 to be a “durchaus selbständige Schrift” and popularised the interpretive distinction between apocalyptic and lyrical sections of the composition.¹⁵

This form-critical basis continues to be influential in the study of these chapters, though is not without challenge.¹⁶ While most accept the formal differences between the prophetic and lyric portions of Isa 24–27, the precise delimitations and implications of these formal differences are debated. The question of the relationship

¹³ Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 196–7.

¹⁴ E.g. T.K. Cheyne rearranged several passages from Isa 24–27 into the *apocalypse* (Isa 24:1–23; 25:6–8; 26:20, 21; 27:1, 12, 13), to which he assigned a fourth-century date. This textual re-arrangement was based on his view that Isa 24–27 is a “mosaic” of roughly contemporary passages, which had been combined with “less editorial skill than usual” (*Introduction to the Book of Isaiah* [London: Adam and Charles Black, 1895], 155–56). Similarly, in his discussion of Isa 24–27, Plöger skips the songs (25:1–5 and 26:1–6) since they are “not only independent and distinct from the surrounding verses, [but] they should also be interpreted separately and independently. . . . Neither psalm has anything to do with the eschatological narrative” (*Theocracy and Eschatology*, 69; cf. 71). More recently, Blenkinsopp grouped together three of the songs (25:1–5; 25:9–12; and 26:1–6) on literary and linguistic grounds (*Isaiah 1–39*, 360–65).

¹⁵ Duhm, *Jesaja*, xii, 143.

¹⁶ E.g. G.W. Anderson raises the suspicion that the strong contrast often drawn between the literary forms of Isa 24–27 is exaggerated due to an unjustified association with apocalyptic (“Isaiah XXIV–XXVII Reconsidered,” in *Congress Volume, Bonn 1962*, VTSup 9, ed. J.A. Emerton [Leiden: Brill, 1963], 122).

between the prophetic and lyric passages continued through the nineteenth century, with some holding Isa 24–27 to be a substantial unity and others a loosely edited collection of eschatological oracles. Even those who found more continuity between the chapters used words like "probably" to describe the unity of the text.¹⁷ These paired implications of the early quest for the prophet—namely, the unmooring of Isa 24–27 from an eighth-century historical context and from a particular literary context—meant that scholars were free to identify other possible historical contexts and literary intertexts.

In addition to the quest for the "authentic" prophetic word, a second early interpretive interest continues to influence the study of Isa 24–27, namely the identity of the anonymous "city." The near-synonymous terms קריה (*town*) and עיר (*city*) are repeated throughout the composition, and as a *Leitmotif*, are central to its interpretation. Given the paucity of historical details in these chapters, many scholars turned to the unnamed city as the key to unlocking their historical setting and interpretation. However, the city remains unnamed, leading Plöger to bemoan the interpretive crux: "The ghost of the accursed fortified city haunts [Isa 27:10] and clouds the view; in fact, this city . . . seems to be the chief enemy that is constantly impeding the interpretation of our apocalypse."¹⁸ This longstanding concern—even preoccupation—with the city's identity has driven scholarly inquiry, resulting in a large number of proposals for the identity of the city in Isa 24–27 (similar to the long list of arguments for the text's date). These diverse explanations for the city can be grouped into two main categories: historical-political and literary-symbolic.

¹⁷ Friedrich Bleek, "These four chapters form, probably, one continuous prophecy," *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, vol. 2, trans. G.H. Venable (London: Bell and Daldy, 1869), 57.

¹⁸ Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 74.

In the first (historical-political) group, proposed cities include Babylon,¹⁹ Moab or a Moabite city (Dibon),²⁰ Jerusalem,²¹ and less often, Nineveh²² or Samaria.²³ Although far from consensus, Babylon has garnered the most support, given its importance elsewhere in the book of Isaiah as the evil city *par excellence* and its prominence in chs. 13–14.²⁴ Others attempt to identify the unnamed city with Moab, based on the appearance of Moab in Isa 24–27. This brief judgment oracle (25:10–12) is puzzling in its specificity, given the otherwise cosmic scope of Isa 24–27. A minority of scholars have therefore searched for a Moabite background for the entirety of the text. Otto Eissfeldt, for example, rejected Babylon as the city in question in part because the feet of the poor are said to "trample" it (26:6); for him this meant the city must be in or near Judah.²⁵ Furthermore, some have observed

¹⁹ Because Babylon fell several times in the constant political upheaval of the ancient world, those who identify the city of Isa 24–27 with Babylon still differ on *which* fall of Babylon is behind the text—Sennacherib in 680 B.C.E., Cyrus in 539, Darius in 521, Xerxes in 482, and Alexander in 331 (Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 33). Cyrus's victory over Babylon in 539 B.C.E. is arguably the most central in biblical history. However, Cyrus is believed to have entered the city as its rightful ruler, without a struggle, a striking contrast to the violent destruction described by Isa 24. Lindblom identified the city as Babylon destroyed by Xerxes in 485 B.C.E. (*Die Jesaja-Apokalypse: Jes. 24–27* [Lund: Gleerup, 1938], 72–84). Wilhelm Rudolph believed it to be Babylon captured by Alexander in 331 B.C.E. (*Jesaja 24–27*, BWANT 62 [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933], 61–4); see also Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 318.

²⁰ Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, trans. Peter Ackroyd (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965 [1st ed. 1934]), 326.

²¹ Dan Johnson, *Chaos*, 17, 29–35 (only Isa 24:10; the subsequent city references are to Babylon); Millar, *Origin of Apocalyptic*, 15–21; Reinhard Scholl, *Die Elenden in Gottes Thronrat: Stilistisch-kompositorische Untersuchungen zu Jesaja 24–27* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 173.

²² H. Grätz, "Die Auslegung und der historische Hintergrund der Weissagung in Jesaja Kap. 24–27," *MGWJ* 35 (1886), 7. Grätz considered chs. 24–27 to be a "zusammenhängende Stück" from just before the fall of Nineveh c. 612 B.C.E. (2).

²³ Duhm associates the destroyed city of chs. 25–26 with John Hyrcanus's destruction of Samaria in 107 B.C.E. (*Jesaja*, 150, 154). Although this view of the city in Isa 24:10 is no longer tenable, many scholars continue to identify the "forsaken city" of Isa 27:10 with Samaria (e.g. Micaël Bürki, "City of Pride, City of Glory: The Opposition of Two Cities in Isaiah 24–27," in *Formation*, 58).

²⁴ The connection between the city of Isa 24 and Babylon has sometimes been explained by the literary relationship with chs. 13–14, which specifically mention Babylon (Isa 13:1, 19; 14:4). Cf. Benedikt Otzen, "Traditions and Structures of Isaiah XXIV–XXVII," *VT* 24.2 (1974), 206. Interestingly, Christopher Seitz appeals to the same literary "frame" with chs. 13–14, but identifies Babylon not as the fallen city, but as the destroyer of the fallen city (*Isaiah 1–39*, Interpretation [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993], 175, 178).

²⁵ Eissfeldt, *Old Testament*, 326.

thematic ties with the other Moab oracles in the book (Isa 15:9 and 16:8–10), suggesting a connection of addressee. However, this Moabite proposal for the city's identity has not been widely-accepted, and the mention of Moab in Isa 25:10 can be explained in other ways.²⁶ A third possible referent for the fallen city of Isa 24–27 is Jerusalem. This reading is consistent with a theme seen elsewhere in the book, namely the purification of God's people through judgment (cf. Isa 6:11–13). Dan Johnson advocates this interpretation of the city in ch. 24, arguing that the chapter contains several indications that Jerusalem is the "city of chaos" (24:10): the phrase *ברית עולם* (*eternal covenant*, 24:5) and laws suggestive of Sinai, the expressions *מְשׁוֹשׁ הָאָרֶץ* (*joy of the earth*, 24:11) and *בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ* (*in the midst of the earth*, 24:13), and the tone of lament ("political dirge").²⁷ According to Johnson, these details are more appropriate in reference to Jerusalem than to an enemy city.

The other main interpretive option for the city in Isa 24–27 is a literary-symbolic identification. Instead of identifying the terms *קִרְיָה* and *עִיר* with a particular city or nation, this view identifies the city as representative for something other than a political state. Broadly speaking, this view has gained strength in more recent scholarship. The lack of historical detail and other identifying clues suggests to many that the vagueness is intentional, referring instead to the fate of all evil, not a specific nation—Israel or otherwise.²⁸ Yet this is not a new understanding of the city in Isa 24–27, as the OG preserves an early interpretive tradition which reflects this

²⁶ E.g. Moab as a prose "historicising" of the older poetic material (R.J. Coggins, "Problem of Isaiah 24–27," *ExpTim* 90 [1979], 331); or Moab as symbol of the Transjordan resistance to the conquest, representing all opposition to YHWH's plans of renewing creation (Millar, *Origin of Apocalyptic*, 18). See Chapter 4 for full discussion of the Moab passage (Isa 25:10–12).

²⁷ Johnson, *Chaos*, 25–35. Johnson argues that the city of Isa 25:2 and 26:5–6 is Babylon, and the city of 27:10 has multiple referents (Samaria/the Northern Kingdom and Jerusalem/Judah) resulting from an alleged conflation of traditions (88–91).

²⁸ Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 198–99.

approach. It pluralises the city-motif throughout Isa 24–27 (e.g. *πᾶσα πόλις* in 24:10; *πόλεις* in 24:12), which suggests the city represents all enemy cities.²⁹ Others highlight the thematic contrast between the fallen city and the "strong city" (26:1), as representatives of the City of Man and the City of God.³⁰

Within the literary-symbolic approach, still others prefer a multivocal reading of the city, which could refer to any particular city guilty of bloodshed, while also representing unfaithful Jerusalem or Samaria.³¹ Mark Biddle approaches the city question from a macro-structural literary perspective, given that Isa 24–27 has a “pivotal” position between chs. 13–23 and 28–33.³² He finds a “city discussion” running throughout the entire book, and that chs. 13–33 in particular share a “vocabulary of cities in distress.” Because the constitutive sections (chs. 13–23; 24–27; 28–33) have this vocabulary in common, they should not be considered discrete entities, but should be considered together in their portrayal of the city. Biddle sees the city-motif in Isa 24–27 as purposefully ambiguous, as a literary connector which opens in either direction. In this reading, Isa 24–27 concludes the oracles against the nations and typifies the destruction of the evil foreign city. But it also opens chs. 28–33 as the old, sinful Jerusalem herself, who must face judgment. Hyun Chul Paul

²⁹ The only exception to the OG pluralisation is the singular "strong city" (*πόλις ὀχυρά*) of Isa 26:1.

³⁰ Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah*, 443.

³¹ Chisholm argues that a single referent for the city is not intended, but that the ambiguity is intentional. Insofar as the "eternal covenant" reflects the worldwide Noachic covenant, the fallen city represents any violent city/nation (Isa 24:5; 26:21; via Num 35). On the other hand, insofar as the "eternal covenant" reflects the Sinai stipulations, the fallen city represents God's people in their breach of faith. Chisholm draws heavily from Johnson's study, but disagrees that the evidence demands a single referent ("The Everlasting Covenant' and the 'City of Chaos': Intentional Ambiguity and Irony in Isaiah 24," *CTR* 6.2 [1993], 237–53).

³² Mark Biddle, "The City of Chaos and the New Jerusalem: Isaiah 24–27 in Context," *PRSt* 22.1 (1995), 5–12. Biddle has a rather pessimistic view of historical analyses of Isa 24–27, which in his words are “doomed to failure by the apparently purposive ambiguity and generality of the text” (9).

Kim suggests an increasing anonymity of objects in Isa 13–27—the "wilderness of the sea" (21:1), Dumah (21:11), "desert plain" (21:13), and "valley of vision" (22:1) (with the exception of Tyre [23:1]).³³ Whereas Biddle focuses on the book's "city discourse," Kim posits a purposeful progression which begins with divine judgment on individual nations, but culminates in the open-ended "cosmic forces of mythological and/or political powers" of Isa 24–27.³⁴ These help create a "notably smooth" transition between Isa 13–23 and Isa 24–27.

The city-motif in Isa 24–27 presents other challenges, including its use of different Hebrew terms, its appearance in both prophetic and lyric sections of the text, and its use in both highly negative (e.g. 25:2) and highly positive (e.g. 26:1) contexts. We will return to the city-motif in Chapter 8. The main point here is simply that the question of the city's identity and function within the composition has been a focal issue from the early days of critical (and pre-critical) inquiry,³⁵ and despite a variety of interpretive approaches it remains an open question.

2.2. "Literary" Approaches and the "One-Book" of Isaiah

Within the study of biblical prophecy, one can trace a strong movement towards recognising the literary qualities of the prophetic corpus.³⁶ The Hebrew prophetic

³³ Hyun Chul Paul Kim, "City, Earth, and Empire in Isaiah 24–27," in *Formation*, 38–39.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁵ Ibn Ezra identifies the city of 24:10 as one whose "inhabitants go after vain things," and the city of 25:2 as cities destroyed by Gog and Magog (M. Friedländer, *The Commentary of Ibn Ezra on Isaiah*, vol. 1 [London: Society of Hebrew Literature, 1873], 110, 113).

³⁶ Some now distinguish between "ancient Hebrew prophecy" and "biblical prophecy" (Martti Nissinen, "What is Prophecy? An Ancient Near Eastern Perspective," in *Inspired Speech: Prophecy in the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honour of Herbert B. Huffmon*, ed. John Kaltner and Louis Stulman [London: T&T Clark, 2004], 31). There is, however, little agreement regarding the relationship between these two concepts, with some finding little (e.g. Robert Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed: Reactions and Responses to Failure in the Old Testament Prophetic Traditions* [London: SCM, 1979], esp. 130–56) and others trying to forge a middle way (e.g. Hans Barstad calls for a "positive

books, which are without close parallel in the ancient Near East, reflect quite different processes of development. For Isaiah scholars, this growing realisation prompted discussion of the ways in which one might speak of "unity" within the book of Isaiah. Marvin Tate helpfully schematised the progression in Isaiah studies from "One Prophet" to "Three Prophets" to "One Book."³⁷ The final "one-book" approach has flourished, particularly since the 70's,³⁸ when scholars like Peter Ackroyd, Ronald Clements and Rolf Rendtorff explored new ways to read the book of Isaiah, arguing that the book shows redactional activity across the "three-book" divisions.³⁹ They emphasised the difference between *authorial* unity and *redactional* unity and, in contrast to older scholarship, placed no value judgment on the work of editors. Hugh Williamson observes that,

as regards the first part of the book [of Isaiah], it was normal for monographs and commentaries in the past to start by isolating those passages thought to be 'authentic' to the 8th C prophet, to give them the most attention and then to treat more lightly the rest of the material as 'secondary additions.' Nowadays redaction critics nearly always work the other way round, seeking first to arrive

skepticism" in "No Prophets? Recent Developments in Biblical Prophetic Research and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy," *JSOT* 57 [1993], 46).

³⁷ Marvin Tate, "The Book of Isaiah in Recent Study," in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D.W. Watts*, JSOTSup 235, ed. James W. Watts and Paul R. House (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 22–56. See also Marvin Sweeney, "The Book of Isaiah in Recent Research," *CRSB* 1 (1993), 141–62, and Christopher Hays, "The Book of Isaiah in Contemporary Research," *Religion Compass* 5/10 (2011), 549–66.

³⁸ Blenkinsopp observes that this movement away from Duhm's standard tripartite division of Isaiah corresponds roughly to the period when the Wellhausenian documentary hypothesis was being seriously questioned (*Isaiah* 1–39, 73).

³⁹ In his seminal essay "Isaiah I–XII: Presentation of a Prophet," Peter Ackroyd clarifies, "It is not my intention to try to sort out either the genuine from the non-genuine, or the possible situations . . . Whether the prophet himself or his exegetes were responsible, the prophet appears to us as a man of judgment and salvation" (*Congress Volume: Göttingen, 1977*, VTSup 29 [Leiden: Brill, 1978], 44–5). Clements notes appreciation for scholarship which has shown the various component parts of the book of Isaiah and their historical contexts, but he also observes that this process has had the unfortunate effect of minimising or ignoring links and inter-connections, and "the treatment of passages in isolation which were never intended to be so understood since, from the outset, they took the form of additional interpretations and applications of more primary units" ("The Unity of the Book of Isaiah," *Int* [1982], 129). This assessment applies to his view of Isa 24–27 (122). See also Rendtorff, "The Book of Isaiah: A Complex Unity. Synchronic and Diachronic Reading," in *New Visions of Isaiah*, ed. Roy Melugin and Marvin Sweeney (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996).

at an understanding of the text as it currently exists (synchronic analysis) and then working back from that to the more hypothetical earlier stages (diachronic analysis).⁴⁰

The assumption is that, although diachronic layers are still identifiable, there may be editorial principle(s) at work which makes the given literary arrangement purposeful. For Isaiah scholars in recent years, the *presentation* of the prophet Isaiah is as interesting as the actual *person* of the prophet.⁴¹

Others like David Carr, while finding some evidence for redactional links, even at the macrostructural level, ultimately conclude that the search for unity in the book of Isaiah has had limited success.⁴² This discussion of "unity," whether diachronic or synchronic, is ongoing, and along with newer approaches like feminist, ecological, and reader-response readings, has in large part replaced the quest for the "genuine" prophetic word.⁴³

The influences in this "literary" movement in biblical studies are complex and multi-faceted. However, one major catalyst were developments in the broader field of literary criticism, often associated with New Criticism. New Criticism was a movement in literary criticism popular in the mid-twentieth century which focused attention on the text itself as the object of study, rather than on the "background" of

⁴⁰ H.G.M. Williamson, "Recent Issues in the Study of Isaiah," in *Interpreting Isaiah: Issues and Approaches*, ed. David Firth and H.G.M. Williamson (Nottingham: Apollos, 2009), 29.

⁴¹ Jacob Stromberg, *An Introduction to the Study of Isaiah* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 2.

⁴² David Carr, "Reaching for Unity in Isaiah," *JSOT* 57 (1993): "These texts [Isa 35; 36–39; 40:1–8] represent related attempts to construe the quite varied textual materials that surround them, materials not amenable to being encompassed by any redactor or set of redactors' conception of the whole" (71).

⁴³ Peter Miscall, for example, approaches the text from a reader-response perspective, which explores the plurality of possible meanings in the text and highlights the reader's active role in the creation of meaning: "Throughout this reading of the poem, I am open to ambiguity, polysemy, and different levels of meaning . . . I am not trying to propose just one, focused way of reading the poem, or just one, specific interpretation of the poem" (*Isaiah 34–35: A Nightmare/A Dream*, JSOTSup 281 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999], 24).

the text. Instead of concern for authorial, historical, or cultural context (*extrinsic* elements), critics were interested in the formal properties of texture and structure within the text (*intrinsic* elements).⁴⁴ New Critics preferred poetic texts, as the poetic economy of form and resistance to reduction suited this type of criticism better than did prose texts.⁴⁵ New Criticism has had lasting effects in both literary analysis and biblical studies.⁴⁶

Yet another subtype of literary study is "intertextuality" and its various iterations. Intertextual studies, which are themselves subject to a wide variety of interpretations, tend to pay special attention to lexical repetition and shared vocabulary between texts.⁴⁷ In this sense, they use the same data and some of the

⁴⁴ Two influential essays in this area of literary criticism are W.K. Wimsatt Jr. and M.C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," *The Sewanee Review* 54.3 (1946), 468–88; and Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," trans. Stephen Heath, in *Image-Music-Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 142–48.

⁴⁵ Robert Detweiler, "After the New Criticism: Contemporary Methods of Literary Interpretation," in *Orientation by Disorientation: Studies in Literary Criticism and Biblical Literary Criticism*, ed. Richard A. Spencer (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 1980), 3–4, 6.

⁴⁶ Norman Petersen argues that the rise of literary criticism can be explained in part by a growing dissatisfaction of some with the legacy of form criticism. Given the concern with textually-disintegrative features rather than textually-integrative features, the attention was given to "texts within our texts" ("Literary Criticism in Biblical Studies," in *Orientation by Disorientation: Studies in Literary Criticism and Biblical Literary Criticism Presented in Honor of William A. Beardslee*, ed. Richard A. Spencer [Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1980], 27.).

⁴⁷ The term "intertextuality" is usually attributed to literary theorist Julia Kristeva, in her late 1960's essay "Word, Dialogue and Novel," in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 64–91; from the French *Σημειωτική: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969), 66. Kristeva used the term in reference to the interconnectedness of all text to express the idea that a text cannot meaningfully exist on its own in isolation from other texts. However, subsequent literary and biblical scholars have used the term "intertextuality" in a variety of divergent ways, often having little in common with Kristeva's original concept, e.g. in reference to intentional reuse of language such as "inner-biblical exegesis" or allusion. Whereas for literary scholars like Kristeva, every text is a potential intertext for every other text, for many biblical scholars, there are narrowly-defined criteria for determining an intertext. Some have called for greater precision in the use of the term, arguing that its various uses have led to "methodological murkiness" (Geoffrey Miller, "Intertextuality in Old Testament Research," *CBR* 9.3 [2010], 305). Others call for completely new terminology, reserving the term "intertextuality" for the more political, ideological usage of Kristeva (David Yoon, "The Ideological Inception of Intertextuality and its Dissonance in Current Biblical Studies," *CBR* 12.1 [2012], esp. 72–4).

same textual observations, but employ different methods of analysis toward different goals.

3. "Literary" Treatments of Isaiah 24–27

These literary developments over the past several decades have influenced biblical studies generally and prophetic criticism specifically, including the study of Isa 24–27. In addition to posing new questions, like the *function* of Isa 24–27 within the context of the book of Isaiah, literary approaches have also contributed new ways of answering enduring questions like the identity of the city. Scholars have read Isa 24–27 from a number of different literary angles, including its genre, poetic style, themes, metaphor, and intertextuality. The following section will selectively survey the different broadly literary approaches to Isa 24–27.

3.1. Genre and the Development of Apocalyptic Literature

A relatively early example of "literary" interest in Isa 24–27 is William Millar's revised doctoral thesis, which places the composition along a proposed apocalyptic trajectory by analysing both its poetic meter and thematic repetition.⁴⁸ The study adapts Paul Hanson's thematic "ritual pattern" (threat–war–victory–feast) as part of its aim to trace the development of literary genre from prophecy to apocalyptic.⁴⁹ Millar argues that Isa 24–27 was written (in large part) in the sixth-century B.C.E. (contemporaneous with Isa 40–55) by a disciple of Isaiah who "shared in his visions

⁴⁸ Millar likens his method to literary archaeology: "This approach to data has been used already with success in the archaeological analysis of pottery types" (*Origin of Apocalyptic*, 14).

⁴⁹ Paul Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975). Hanson briefly addresses Isa 24–27 and considers it to be an "early apocalyptic" writing (citing the absence of specific enemy, lack of human instrumentality, and "ritual pattern"). He suggests that Isa 24–27 reflects a sociological fissure between the hierocratic party and the visionaries (cf. 24:2), and that the "city of chaos" is Jerusalem as controlled by the former (313–14).

for the reconstruction of Israel" after the Babylonian exile.⁵⁰ Evidence for this date includes his assessment of the excellent quality of some of the poetry (24:1–25:9; 26:1–8) and the text's failure to reflect the emerging inner-Jewish conflict suggested by Hanson, since both point to an earlier point on the apocalyptic trajectory than suggested by Hanson.⁵¹ Nonetheless, Millar observes that the "power of myth to see beyond the limits imposed by historical event was taking hold" in the early layers of Isa 24–27 (identified as 24:1–16a; 24:16b–25:9; 26:1–8), and therefore concluded that Isa 24–27 is "proto-apocalyptic."⁵²

However, Millar's analysis has not been well received on the whole, as it is weakened from the outset by several methodological problems. First, its frequent and extensive textual emendations often lack support, yet are determinative for his metrical analysis.⁵³ Second, the study relies heavily on a stringent, highly regular metrical system for classical Hebrew poetry, an assumption that can no longer be sustained.⁵⁴ Third, the themes identified in Isa 24–27 (i.e. threat, war, victory, feast)

⁵⁰ Millar, *Origin of Apocalyptic*, 115.

⁵¹ The evaluation of the quality of the poetry of Isa 24–27 has itself been the subject of disagreement. While some like Millar evaluate the literary style positively, others consider it to be imitative pastiche. As early as Johann Eichhorn (1752–1827), the text was compared unfavourably with "genuine" Isaiah material with its "unmanliness of expression [*Unmännliche im Ausdruck*]" (*Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, vol. 4 [Göttingen: Rosenbusch, 1824], 86), and Wilhelm Gesenius (1786–1842) pointed out the paronomastic quality of the text (*Der Prophet Jesaia*, vol 2 [Leipzig: Vogel, 1821], 763). Grätz considered the "schwerfällig und hart" style of Isa 24–27 to be evidence against Isaianic authorship ("Die Auslegung," 2).

⁵² Millar, *Origin of Apocalyptic*, 118.

⁵³ For example, in the very first verse (24:1), Millar deletes the finite verb רעה (*and he will twist*) as dittography, citing better "symmetry" as the only grounds for deletion. Other decisions are based on the supposition of later "prosaizing expansions" (including the definite article, the relative pronoun אשר, and sometimes the conjunction *wāw* and other conjunctive particles) which are not included in syllable counts (*Origin of Apocalyptic*, 24). One gets the impression that these textual decisions are conforming to the author's preconceived notion about poetic metre rather than analysing the metre as it stands. Cf. John Oswalt, "Recent Studies in Old Testament Eschatology and Apocalyptic," *JETS* 24.4 (1981), 294–96.

⁵⁴ David Petersen and Kent Richards trace an "emerging scholarly consensus that denies the existence of meter in classical Hebrew poetry" (*Interpreting Hebrew Poetry* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], 42).

are general and ubiquitous in ancient literature, and therefore of questionable significance for his purposes. Moreover, the repeated thematic patterns are incomplete in almost every case in Isa 24–27, which suggests that the pattern is being forced into a Procrustean bed. Nonetheless, Millar's study was one of the first literary analyses of the text, its genre conclusion (i.e. proto-apocalyptic) has been widely accepted.

3.2. Theme and Poetics

Hendrik Bosman's study on the *syntactic* cohesion of Isa 24–27 is a careful analysis of the final form of the text.⁵⁵ Though aware of redaction-critical questions, his stated aim is nonetheless "to examine whether the text-syntactic structure of Isa 24–27 in its present form allows us to read these chapters as a coherent text."⁵⁶ The analysis traces the syntactical relationships within the text, beginning with the lowest levels ("units that have the status of clause constituent within another unit" [e.g. אשר-clauses and infinitive clauses]) and working up to the highest level ("actant patterns, semantic connections, [and] other considerations").⁵⁷ Although he reaches the conclusion that Isa 24–27 is not likely an original unity, the syntactical "interruptions" seem less intrusive to him when imagined in the context of a text read with audience participation. Similar to a cantata (following Lindblom's genre proposal), which he grants is an anachronistic label, the main line of discourse and the different speakers are united thematically. For example, the song at 25:1–5 functions as a transition from the announcement of judgment (ch. 24) to the

⁵⁵ H. J. Bosman, "Syntactic Cohesion in Isaiah 24–27," in *Studies in Isaiah 24–27*, Jesaja Werkplaats, ed. H. J. Bosman and H. van Grol (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 19–50.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

description of YHWH's feast on the mountain, by presenting a singular "I" who expresses trust despite the announced judgment. The confession "You are my God" (25:1) is then taken up on the mountain "on that day" as "This is our God" (25:9). Bosman argues that the text-syntactical structure of the final form presents a coherent text, able to be read within a single "consistent communicational framework."⁵⁸ His insights into the syntax of Isa 24–27 will be important for the present study, since literary cohesion involves discourse conjunctions and other syntactic dynamics. Bosman's essay is part of a larger collection of studies in Isa 24–27, many of which focus on the literary quality of the text.

Lastly, Brian Doyle uses a different literary lens and applies metaphor theory to a close reading of Isa 24–27.⁵⁹ Because metaphor conveys meaning only insofar as the referent is identifiable, he seeks to identify allusions that would point the reader in this direction. Some of Doyle's metaphorical referents seem to be overly specific and without adequate substantiation. Nonetheless the study attends to the rich imagery and metaphorical language of the passage.

3.3. Intertextuality and Scribal Prophecy

The final literary approach to biblical prophecy, one which has been especially important for the study of Isa 24–27, is intertextuality. The allusive quality of Isa 24–27 lends itself to intertextual readings, and several recent studies explore the ways in which the composition cites, develops, and interacts with other texts.⁶⁰ This literary

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Doyle, *Metaphorically Speaking*.

⁶⁰ Stephen Cook, for example, sees in Isa 26 "a new medium of revelation . . . that relies on the mantic study and cross-referencing of Scripture" ("Deliverance as Fertility and Resurrection: Echoes of Second Isaiah in Isaiah 26," in *Formation*, 165). The intertextual nature of Isa 24–27 was observed

focus reflects the larger movement in Isaiah studies toward seeking redactional "unity" in the book of Isaiah, but also considers other inter-texts, biblical and non-biblical. Some of these studies are diachronic, typically depending on relative rather than absolute dating of texts, and others are synchronic. Whereas the former is more concerned with the composition history of the book and the interpretation of earlier texts, the latter is concerned primarily with the literary, theological, and thematic interactions within the text itself.⁶¹ Needless to say, there are a variety of approaches to intertextual study, and this methodological pluralism is reflected in readings of Isa 24–27.

John Day is an early representative of reading Isa 24–27 intertextually.⁶² His study traces "inner scriptural interpretation" through Isa 26:13–27:11, arguing that its author draws on Hos 13:4–14:10. Unlike Marvin Sweeney (see below), Day uses mostly thematic—not lexical—parallels to establish literary dependence. He argues that, with only one exception out of eight textual citations, the Isaiah passage follows the order of Hosea, which along with rarity of some of the themes, supports his conclusion that Isa 26:13–27:11 is dependent on Hos 13:4–14:10. Besides arguing for literary dependence, Day finds that Isa 26:13–27:11 is a unified passage which does not depend on a distinct "Isaianic" school, but draws on the prophet Hosea for hope in its post-exilic context.⁶³ Day's study does not, then, contribute to the "one-

in early critical scholarship (e.g. Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 55).

⁶¹ Though he does not reject the terms altogether, David Clines has helpfully demonstrated that a rigid dichotomy between *diachronic* and *synchronic* study is problematic and that both approaches are integral, even within a single discipline or method ("Beyond Synchronic/Diachronic," in *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis*, ed. Johannes C. de Moor [Leiden: Brill, 1995], 52–71).

⁶² John Day, "A Case of Inner Scriptural Interpretation: The Dependence of Isaiah xxvi.13–xxvii.11 on Hosea xiii. 4–xiv. 10 (Eng. 9) and its Relevance to Some Theories of the Redaction of the 'Isaiah Apocalypse,'" *JTS* 31.2 (1980), 309–19.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 317–18.

book" approach to Isaiah, though it does highlight inner-prophetic interpretation.⁶⁴ Apart from the validity of any one parallel, Day takes seriously the allusive nature of Isa 24–27, a quality which has interested scholars ever since.⁶⁵

A second influential essay, by Marvin Sweeney, explores the intertextual relationship between Isa 24–27 and other passages within the book of Isaiah, which he calls "textual citations."⁶⁶ The study identifies seven main texts which the author of Isa 24–27 has taken from earlier Isaianic texts and looks for patterns and significance in this reuse.⁶⁷ He identifies and analyses them separately before considering their overall impact for understanding the redactional function of Isa 24–27 in the book. Sweeney's conclusion, which has been widely accepted, is that these chapters were not composed in isolation from the rest of Isaiah and only redactionally juxtaposed to the oracles against the nations (Isa 13–23). Rather, the author/compiler reused existing materials from the Isaiah literary tradition (in whatever form it then existed) and reapplied them according to the universal

⁶⁴ In my judgment, Day's study is vulnerable to methodological critique in a couple of ways. First, the argument depends on frequent textual emendation to support the parallels. For example, the very first parallel at Isa 26:13 depends on the LXX reading (not the MT). Such appeals to the versions are necessary given the difficulty of the Hebrew text, but their centrality to this argument is problematic. The second methodological vulnerability is similar to that of Millar's study (above), namely that literary dependence is harder to establish using thematic ties than verbal parallels. Stock imagery such as the revivification of nature, ubiquitous in prophetic restoration oracles, contributes little to a case for dependence. In some cases, there are equally likely thematic parallels within the book of Isaiah (e.g. the birth metaphor in Isa 33:11; 37:3; or 66:7, 9). Interestingly, Day connects the clearest inner-Isaiah parallel—Isa 27:2–6 ("the new song of the vineyard")—not to Isa 5:1–7 (the "song of the vineyard," though he grants the recollection), but to Hosea's imagery (313).

⁶⁵ See also Benjamin Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 194. His study on allusion in Deutero-Isaiah touches on Isa 24–27. He contrasts Deutero-Isaiah's use of scriptural texts to that of Isa 24–27 and concludes that Isa 24–27 uses earlier texts differently. Specifically, he cites its lack of "affinity for the split-up pattern, word play, or sound play" and lack of extended verbal parallels to source material, all of which he argues sets Isa 24–27 apart from Deutero-Isaiah.

⁶⁶ Marvin Sweeney, "Textual Citations in Isaiah 24–27: Toward an Understanding of the Redactional Function of Chapters 24–27 in the Book of Isaiah," *JBL* 107 (1988), 39–52.

⁶⁷ Sweeney's citations include: Isa 24:13 (17:6), 24:16 (21:2; 33:1), 25:4–5 (4:5b–6; 32:1–2), 25:11b–12 (2:9–17), 26:5 (2:6–21), 26:17–18 (13:8; 66:7–9), and 27:1–13 (5:1–7; 11:10–16).

orientation of chs. 24–27. In reading these chapters as an interaction with other parts of the book, Sweeney differs from Day's conclusion that at least 26:13–27:11 are not from a distinctly Isaianic school or tradition. His conclusion that the citations exhibit a "universalising" tendency represents a rare point of consensus in the study of Isa 24–27.

Donald Polaski approaches Isa 24–27 from an intertextual perspective closer to Kristeva's use of the term, in that he is less concerned with establishing direction of dependence, though he still has historical interests.⁶⁸ So, for example, his analysis of the literary parallel between Isa 24:17–18a and Jer 48:43–44 observes "the fluid nature of this text," and he concludes that that neither text is citing the other, but that both texts employ a popular proverb (*Sprichwort*) or threat (*Drohwort*).⁶⁹ His broader aim is to explain the text in light of Restoration society as a prompt toward renewed temple worship.

A second monograph is devoted to intertextuality in Isa 24–27, tracing both inner-Isaiah relationships and, more broadly, the relationship of the text with other parts of the Hebrew Bible.⁷⁰ This study by Todd Hibbard is, unlike Polaski, decidedly diachronic in its approach, and the method involves establishing the older text and the alluding one. Criteria for identifying intertexts include shared vocabulary, thematic coherence, a meaningful relationship between the two texts, and chronological feasibility. Hibbard differentiates his study from a purely synchronic one and seeks "to retain a diachronic arrangement of the texts, however sketchy our

⁶⁸ Donald C. Polaski, *Authorizing an End: The Isaiah Apocalypse and Intertextuality*, Biblical Interpretation 50 (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

⁶⁹ Ibid., 114.

⁷⁰ J. Todd Hibbard, *Intertextuality in Isaiah 24–27: The Reuse and Evocation of Earlier Text and Traditions* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

knowledge about those matters may be . . . [and] attempt[s] to understand what the author(s) was doing in the composition of Isaiah 24–27 *based on the textual evidence*."⁷¹ Hibbard typically finds Isa 24–27 to be the later text in a given intertextual pair, and following Sweeney's conclusion, finds it to have a universalising tendency. In contrast to Polaski's reading, Hibbard explains the parallel between Isa 24:17–18a and Jer 48:43–44a diachronically. The substantive difference between the two texts is that the vocative phrase "O inhabitant of Moab" in Jer 48:43 is the more inclusive "O inhabitant of the earth" in Isa 24:17. This switch from particular nation to worldwide addressee, Hibbard argues, is consistent with the universalising tendency of the Isaiah text and likely intended to fortify the authority and reliability of the new oracle.⁷²

Other shorter studies of Isa 24–27 trace literary parallels in the form of echo, allusion, or inner-biblical exegesis. These related issues are featured in the SBL volume of collected essays and have a literary focus. Stephen Cook considers the influence of "Second-Isaiah" on Isa 26, especially vv. 19–21.⁷³ His two main intertexts are Isa 44:1–5 and Isa 54. The relationship is dependent on thematic parallels which, as is often the case, have resonances with many other texts; e.g. "the thematic flow of the lament in Isa 26 mirrors the movement from dry barrenness to lush fertility in Isa 44:1–5."⁷⁴ Similarly, Cook posits the "universalizing thrust" as a common theme in the "Second-Isaiah" tradition (42:6; 45:22; 49:6; 56:3–6; 56:7) and, in continuity with current consensus, finds this reflected in Isa 26. While this is

⁷¹ Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 4 (italics original).

⁷² *Ibid.*, 55.

⁷³ Stephen Cook, "Deliverance as Fertility and Resurrection: Echoes of Second Isaiah in Isaiah 26," in *Formation*, 165–82.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 178.

indeed a similarity, one must be careful about dichotomising "universal" versus "nationalistic" tendencies in a text, as often they seem to be held in tension (cf. Isa 2:1–5; 19:18ff.). William Barker's recent study is concerned with the ancient Near Eastern background of Isa 24–27, especially its resonances with Ugaritic texts.⁷⁵ Although the study is not an intertextual study per se, the literary connections between Isa 24–27 and the Ugaritic Baal cycle are important for his analysis.

4. Consensus and Contention: The *Status Questionis*

This survey of research on Isa 24–27 has been necessarily selective, showing the diverse interpretive interests brought to the text and the variety of conclusions about its history, meaning, and literary character. I have highlighted several early interpretive questions, many of which continue to be debated, as well as the larger developments in prophetic studies and their effect on the study of Isa 24–27. A few matters of consensus emerge from the discussion. First, with rare exception, scholars agree that these four chapters form a unit within the book of Isaiah. Second, research is agreed that Isa 24–27 is, nevertheless, not completely distinct or independent. The composition frequently cites, alludes to, and develops other parts of the book of Isaiah (and other texts), many instances of which "universalise" the earlier texts. Third, the focus on "that day" in Isa 24–27, along with its cosmic scope, use of the Leviathan myth, and possible attestation of belief in the resurrection of the dead, together suggest an early form or forerunner of apocalyptic writing. The terms used recently are "proto-apocalyptic" and "early-apocalyptic."

⁷⁵ William D. Barker, *Isaiah's Kingship Polemic: An Exegetical Study of Isaiah 24–27* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

However, beyond these matters, there is little agreement. Although the Duhmian proposal of a fully apocalyptic text from the second century is no longer tenable after the Qumran discoveries, no consensus has taken its place in the interpretation of Isa 24–27. The "apocalyptic" label has been largely rejected in lieu of "early—" or "proto-apocalyptic," but these terms provide minimal aid for interpretation, and the historical issues like date and process of composition, historical background, and identity of the anonymous "city" are still disputed. Almost every scholarly treatment of these chapters mentions the difficulty of discerning a unified argument or coherent logic across the text, a "maddeningly fragmentary text that rapidly shifts its focus."⁷⁶ And while some scholars find a considerable "unity" in Isa 24–27, few have treated the question systematically from a synchronic perspective that accounts for the text in its entirety. The many scholarly proposals for date and redaction, along with widely divergent assessments of literary "unity" all contribute to the ongoing lack of consensus in the interpretation of this unique section of Isaiah.

In light of these continuing questions, the problem that this thesis will address is the structure and unity of Isa 24–27 as a literary text. Given that language functions within contexts—at every level from words and phrases, to sentences and paragraphs—this project proposes to investigate literary cohesion within this major unit of Isaiah in a systematic fashion. It will not attempt to defend any particular view of the date or authorship of these chapters, but will read the text synchronically,

⁷⁶ Donald C. Polaski, "Destruction, Construction, Argumentation: A Rhetorical Reading of Isaiah 24–27," in *Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Apocalyptic Discourse*, ed. Greg Carey and L. Gregory Bloomquist (St. Louis, MI: Chalice, 1999), 21.

as preserved in the Masoretic tradition, in conversation with the textual traditions represented by the Qumran manuscripts and early versions.

To conclude, the "literariness" of the biblical writings has been an important factor in the study of the Hebrew prophets over the past several decades. Despite the significant differences between diachronic and synchronic methods, they have in common an interest in reading the prophets as literary creations. Despite significant scholarly interest in the literary dynamics of Isa 24–27, however, there remains a remarkable lack of consensus about the internal coherence and logic of this text. It is for this reason that this project aims to explore those elements *within* Isa 24–27 that tie its various units together and contribute to its textuality.

CHAPTER 2 AIMS AND METHOD

1. Aims of the Study

1.1. Aims and Interests

This thesis has three leading aims which, because they are conceptually prior to methodology, will preface this chapter.¹ The first of these aims is to identify and describe the linguistic means by which biblical Hebrew literature evidences texture, with an emphasis on literary cohesion in poetic texts. Although there is significant overlap between cohesive elements in prose and non-prose genres, each type of literature, including various sub-genres and even each individual author, expresses cohesion in unique ways. Given that discourse dynamics within biblical poetry are generally less explored than those of prose texts,² and given that Isa 24–27 is poetic, the focus of this project will be literary cohesion as expressed in poetry. If poetry's tendency to "break the rules" of language holds true for its expression of cohesion, we may expect poetic cohesion to manifest in unique ways.

The second aim of the project is to apply these cohesion categories to the analysis of Isa 24–27, particularly the ongoing debate surrounding its "unity," and ask how the various sections within these chapters relate to each other, i.e. if and how the text "hangs together." Because this question of unity in Isa 24–27 has long

¹ For a helpful discussion of the relationship between aim and method, see Robert Morgan with John Barton, *Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), esp. 5–15.

² Discourse analysis (i.e. text linguistics) is perhaps more naturally applied to narrative texts, since narrative more regularly follows expected patterns of discourse organisation than does poetry. The discourse analytical approach to biblical narrative is well-represented, e.g. Robert Longacre, *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39–48* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003). However, in describing the discourse approach, Robert Dooley and Stephen Levinsohn note that "from narrative, it should be possible to extend your understanding to other genres" (*Analyzing Discourse: A Manual of Basic Concepts* [SIL and University of North Dakota, 2000], 56).

preoccupied scholars and remains an area of significant interpretive disagreement, this analysis of literary cohesion is oriented toward providing a more methodologically rigorous analysis for the construal of the structure and coherence of this passage. The third aim is to draw together this primarily linguistic analysis to evaluate what role cohesion, in service to more traditional methods of criticism, plays in the interpretation of Isa 24–27 and its function in the book of Isaiah.

Before describing cohesion itself, it will be helpful to set out a couple of working presuppositions, situate the study in dialogue with other critical methods, and justify this type of study with Isa 24–27 in particular. The first of these presuppositions is that literary context, what linguists call the *co-text* (alternatively, *text world* or *textual world*) is of crucial importance for understanding a written discourse, yet is often treated in a cursory manner or neglected altogether in biblical studies. The co-text is the verbal environment of a word, phrase, or larger unit of text. It is crucial for interpretation since "any sentence other than the first in a fragment of discourse, will have the whole of its interpretation forcibly constrained by the preceding text, not just those phrases which obviously and specifically refer to the preceding text, like *the aforementioned*."³ Foundational to the approach taken here to reading Isa 24–27 is the principle that "there is always a great deal more evidence available to the hearer [or reader] for interpreting a sentence than is contained in the sentence itself."⁴ Although this presupposition may seem so obvious that it needs no special attention, its role in understanding a given text can hardly be overstated. Closely related to co-text is another constraint on meaning, namely

³ Gillian Brown and George Yule, *Discourse Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 46.

⁴ Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion*, 142.

literary genre.⁵ Though in recent years, interpretive methods in biblical studies have given more attention to the literary dynamics of texts, there nonetheless remains a tendency to underestimate the role that contextual awareness can have on interpretation and thereby to analyse texts atomistically.⁶ This analysis is a contribution towards the process of reading prophetic texts as literature.

A second, related, presupposition is that units within a larger text may contain extensive "intertextual" relationships with the rest of the text, and more widely, with external "texts." These intertextual relationships mean that a given text is identifiable both as a distinct unit and also as a part of a larger whole. Wilfred Watson, for example, notes that in theory a "closed" poem is one that is "a self-contained unit, intelligible in its own terms and needing no other text for its correct interpretation."⁷ Thus in theory, a poem is identifiable as an individual literary unit. However, he grants that in practice a variety of external factors contribute to interpretation, including the readerly variables such as past experience with language or knowledge of other works by the same author, or the ability to recognise allusion or irony. Recent reader-response and intertextuality theories in literary criticism support this concession by emphasising additional co-texts and the active, creative role of the reader in the process of interpretation. Because a thorough discussion of hermeneutical matters goes beyond the scope of this project, it must suffice here to

⁵ Genre is part of the literary context of a given sentence and therefore partly determines the meaning and/or truth claims of the sentence (cf. Kevin Vanhoozer, "The Semantics of Biblical Literature: Truth and Scripture's Diverse Literary Forms," in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D.A. Carson and John Woodbridge [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1986], 80). Therefore, competence in reading/interpretation must account for genre and its associated literary conventions.

⁶ E.g. Paul Reddit, "Once Again, the City in Isaiah 24–27," *HAR* 10 (1986): 317–35. In this case, the "context" for analysis is a reconstructed pre-history of textual fragments, not the literary context of those fragments.

⁷ Wilfred Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 62–3.

grant that even discrete, "closed" discourses are perhaps less self-contained than we imagine, a property that is increasingly appreciated in biblical studies.

The focus of the present analysis on the cohesive elements within Isa 24–27, however, will be neither to establish its "closedness" as a poetic discourse (centripetal), on the one hand, nor to highlight the myriad of intertextual phenomena that it shares with other prophetic literature, especially other sections of the book of Isaiah (centrifugal), on the other. It accepts both qualities as highlighting different characteristics of the text—its identity as a distinct major section within Isaiah, and its frequently allusion to other texts. However, because the latter characteristic has been the subject of several recent studies, the present focus will be more heavily on the former, that is the internal dynamics of Isa 24–27 and the signs which connect and place semantic constraint on its various sections.

1.2. What the Study Is Not

Unlike a number of recent studies which focus on the redactional "unity" of Isaiah and other prophetic collections, including the Twelve, this study will structure and read the text along synchronic lines. Accordingly, one may notice the lack of argument for authorship, date, redaction(s), and even intention(s). Though this may seem to some to be an oversight, its absence is deliberate.⁸ The study does not view Isa 24–27 as a source to reconstruct the history of a particular historical period, a

⁸ Literary theorists and biblical scholars continue to debate the philosophical, hermeneutical question of the location of meaning in texts (if it exists at all!). For the sake of argument, the approach taken here is that the location of meaning is within the text—granting the important roles that the reader has in the construction of meaning and that the author/editor(s) had in the creation of the text. If the author or compiler of the text possessed facility in the language and expressed themselves clearly, then one can reasonably assume a significant degree of overlap between the study of the text *as* text and text as reflection of authorial intention.

decision which stems, in large part, from the paucity of historical indicators within the text itself. It is assumed that the text originated and functioned in a particular historical setting(s), but the choice has been made to focus on text-internal elements.

There may be other helpful ways to approach the question of authorship. In his essay on the "reason" for Song of Songs, David Clines gives helpful alternatives to the search for the real author. He notes the speculative nature of the attempt in regards to Song of Songs and proposes instead a description of the text's implied author and implied historical matrix. Whereas traditional historical criticism is most interested in the real authors and ideal readers (who Clines rather humorously suggests are modern scholars), he inverts this paradigm and looks for the implied authors and real readers, both ancient and modern.⁹ This study follows Clines in his interest in what the text implies about its authorship and setting (though not necessarily in his actual method) and in what readers may take away from the text. The approach is promising for our Isaiah text, because Isa 24–27 is set off from its larger literary context, to some degree at least, as well as from any clear or specific historical setting; it is "disinterred from historical context, . . . drift[ing] unmoored."¹⁰ The approach taken here does not claim that current readers can infer nothing about its authorship, origin, history of development, or historical setting. It simply highlights that such historical questions are inescapably speculative, particularly in the case of the text in question, and may not actually help us to become better readers of Isa 24–27.

⁹ David J.A. Clines, "Why is There a Song of Songs and What Does It Do to You If You Read It?" in *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible*, ed. J. Cheryl Exum (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 95 n. 1.

¹⁰ Hays, "Hebrew Diachrony," 7.

In fact, it is remarkable that inquiries into Isa 24–27 such as provenance, authorship, redactional history, the development of apocalyptic literature, and other "historical-critical" matters have maintained scholarly interest since the early days of biblical criticism, yet have reached remarkably limited consensus. As mentioned earlier in regards to the history of interpretation, despite numerous attempts over several decades to establish the date of Isa 24–27 (whether as a whole or in compositional layers), there is no agreement, and the criteria for such analyses remain decidedly subjective. Moreover, the criteria which do exist are based too often on modern expectations for what constitutes discourse coherence and are therefore at risk of anachronism.¹¹ This study does not intend to answer these pointedly historical questions, though it will undoubtedly be enriched in its interaction with the insights of historical criticism. Instead of these historical concerns, this study has a "literary" focus in the sense that its primary aim is "to elucidate . . . texts, not to reconstruct what they refer to."¹²

The present study should also be related to a second line of inquiry, namely discourse analysis (i.e. text-linguistics), which has a related but broader set of goals. The aim of discourse analysis is to identify and describe the hierarchy of language features within spoken or written texts (especially those above sentence-level) and to

¹¹ "Empirical" models for interpretation are a promising avenue for exploring ancient conceptions of literary "unity." Cf. Joshua A. Berman, *Inconsistency in the Torah: Ancient Literary Convention and the Limits of Source Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); William A. Tooman, "Literary Unity, Empirical Models, and the Compatibility of Synchronic and Diachronic Reading," in *Ezekiel: Current Debates and Future Directions*, ed. William A. Tooman and Penelope Barter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 497–512; Christopher B. Hays, "From Propaganda to Apocalypse: An Empirical Model for the Formation of Isaiah 24–27," *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 6.1 (2017): 120–44; and Jeffrey H. Tigay, ed., *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

¹² Morgan and Barton, *Biblical Interpretation*, 206.

explain how these work together in a given text.¹³ The approach shares the assumption that some aspects of language can only be explained by appealing to the supra-sentential level, e.g. pronoun reference patterns. Special emphasis is placed on the overarching literary features of a discourse as well as how different genres use such features for their own communicative purposes. One example of this, argued by Robert Longacre, is the capability of many languages to show paragraph closure and paragraph unity in ways which can be compared with sentence or clause grammar.¹⁴ A common interest between cohesion and discourse analysis is a concern for a careful reading of textual details: while it is assumed that many biblical texts have complex literary histories, discourse analysis and cohesion analysis are both synchronic in their orientation.¹⁵ Another similarity between the two methods is an interest in supra-sentential dynamics, that is features which develop across and affect levels above the clause or sentence. Given this significant overlap between discourse analysis and the analysis of textual cohesion, the latter may be considered a subset of discourse analysis. The study is not intended to offer a comprehensive defence of a certain linguistic theory. It draws extensively from linguistic insights, but is interested in using linguistic insights to explain the cohesive dynamics of Isa 24–27. As such, its contribution lies not in linguistic theory, but in illuminating a biblical text using linguistic methods.

¹³ Robert Bergen, "Discourse Analysis: Biblical Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, ed. Geoffrey Khan. Cited 27 Aug, 2018. Online <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/10.1163/2212-4241_ehll_EHLL_COM_00000105>.

¹⁴ Robert E. Longacre, "Paragraph as a Grammatical Unit," in *Syntax and Semantics*, vol. 12 *Discourse and Syntax*, ed. Talmy Givón (London: Academic Press, 1979), 115–34.

¹⁵ Admittedly, this can result in tension between different explanations for the same textual phenomena. See, for example, Randall Buth, "Methodological Collision between Source Criticism and Discourse Analysis: The Problem of 'Unmarked Temporal Overlay' and the Pluperfect/Nonsequential *wayyiqtol*," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. R.D. Bergen (Dallas: SIL, 1994), 138–54.

Finally, although this analysis of Isa 24–27 involves the readerly side of interpretation, it is not an "interested" or ideological reading, e.g. feminist or ecological.¹⁶ While it acknowledges the active role of the reader in the interpretive process, the object of study is the text itself rather than the reader's of an ideology's interaction with the text. Insofar as it is possible to read the text like an ancient reader, this will be the goal of the analysis. Reader-response, feminist, or ideological criticisms may, of course, contribute to the discussion, but these interests are not focal for the present study.

1.3. Reasons for the Method

There are several reasons why attending to literary cohesion is promising for understanding Isa 24–27 in particular. First, it addresses an ongoing dispute in the interpretation of Isa 24–27. Few passages in Isaiah are so clearly a discrete unit, yet at the same time so disputed in terms of structure and unity. Despite the strong consensus that these chapters "belong together," the nature of this *prima facie* observation is rarely explored. One might expect that such a supposedly self-contained text would demonstrate a high degree of cohesion and an easily-recognisable coherence, but scholarly studies demonstrate an ongoing struggle to understand the relationship between its various textual parts. This sense of unified "compositeness" remains one of the cruxes of the text. A focus specifically on the

¹⁶ E.g. Phyllis Trible, "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation," *JAAR* 41 (1973), 30–48; Norman Charles, "A Prophetic (Fore)Word: 'A Curse Is Devouring Earth' (Isaiah 24.6)," in *The Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets*, ed. Norman Habel (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 123–28; Terje Stordalen, "Mother Earth in Biblical Hebrew Literature: Ancient and Contemporary Imagination," in *The Centre and the Periphery: A European Tribute to Walter Brueggemann*, ed. Jill Middlemas, David J.A. Clines, and Else K. Holt (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2010), 113–29; Peter Miscall, *Isaiah* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

literary cohesion in the text promises to address this problem directly, and to provide linguistically-grounded categories for analysing the nature of this supposed unity.

A second reason for the study is that it provides evidence for exegesis of the text. Closely related to the first point above are the wide-ranging interpretive views on the passage and its constitutive parts. Though attention to discourse dynamics is not equivalent to exegesis, this study will seek to demonstrate that it is a necessary component of full exegesis. It should be clarified here that linguists typically study living languages in a known cultural context, so an otherwise similar inquiry into biblical texts changes the process significantly. We are no longer working with a text whose meaning is more or less transparent to us, thereby explaining only *how* it means.¹⁷ Rather, we are reading a text whose meaning is debated, and must answer not only *how*, but *what* it means. Reading a biblical text is not, therefore, intuitive in the same way as a routine conversation between language users. Instead, we are working with a text written in an ancient language removed by thousands of years, geography, and cultural and historical setting. Because of this interpretive distance, the present study seeks both to explain *how* the text means and, by using the same

¹⁷ John Barton distinguishes between those critical approaches which aim to discover new interpretations of a text and those, such as "structuralism," which, at least in principle, do not aim to provide novel interpretations of a text. In other words, the intent of the latter approach is to provide an explanatory framework by which to explain the already-held interpretation. Such approaches attempt to answer how, for example, a text as "complex and muddled" as Ecclesiastes can communicate the satisfactorily unified meaning which it has had for readers (*Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996], 132).

However, there are cases in which the structuralist critic must at once propose a new meaning and explain it (i.e. when a text seemingly has no coherent meaning), and in such cases, according to Barton, "no one should complain" (*Reading the Old Testament*, 129). Barton also stresses that methods of text analysis—from redaction criticism to canon criticism—are not actually methods, but really *theories* which are the formalisation of intelligent intuitions. A given methodological theory is "logically subsequent to the intuition about meaning" (244). It is this relativisation of method, at least in part, which leads Barton to criticise, in my view rightly, the tendency to herald any certain method as the normative approach which should abolish its predecessors or competitors.

cohesion categories, to illuminate *what* the text means. It is, therefore, expected that an account of how readers make sense of this text will have exegetical value as well.

A third justification for this approach is that it contributes to the understanding of biblical Hebrew poetry in general and seeks to provide greater terminological and methodological precision to the close reading of biblical poetic texts. Intuiting cohesion is often more difficult—and more important—in poetic than in prose texts: "Cohesion is especially important in poetry, for, because of poetry's terseness, the parataxis, and the omission of certain particles (אֵת and אִשֶּׁר), the relationship between lines is not always spelled out in the same way as it is in prose."¹⁸ Also, as mentioned above, discourse patterns in general, and cohesive relations in particular, have received more scholarly treatment in Hebrew prose than poetry. While lacking the regularity of narrative and other types of prose, poetry nevertheless contains extensive cohesive ties which are crucial for interpretation. Thus it is an expectation that examining cohesion in a particular text will contribute to the understanding and appreciation of biblical Hebrew poetry more generally.

The final reason for this study is that it develops and tests a method of text analysis which aims to address a common problem in biblical criticism, namely how to make sense of literary works whose inner logic and coherence is not immediately evident. Though some ancient literary texts are more easily construed as coherent than others, more often than not there remains a question of how to best relate the sundry constituent parts of a given text. Take, for example, this observation about the book of Ecclesiastes:

¹⁸ Adele Berlin, "Lexical Cohesion and Biblical Interpretation," *HS* 30 (1989), 29.

It is jerky and disjointed; many passages are mutually contradictory; and above all, it is a riot of different interpretations. . . [Yet] almost all readers agree that it is a book with a distinctive and readily recognizable flavour and message which is coherent enough for some people to make it (or at least believe they are making it) a major part of their personal philosophy of life."¹⁹

The same ambivalence regarding inner coherence could be applied to many prophetic texts, perhaps especially those which feature a mixture of genres and themes (e.g. oracular and disputation speech). For passages like these, "in the past, the variety of the material has often impressed more than its cohesion."²⁰ Therefore, this project aims to contribute to the ongoing efforts to understand a challenging yet ubiquitous phenomenon which eludes modern (and ancient) interpretive endeavour—the questionable coherence of literary texts.

2. Cohesion as Aid to Understanding Biblical Texts

2.1. Coherence and Cohesion in Literary Theory

Under normal circumstances, the proficient language user is able to intuitively discern if a set of words or sentences hangs together in a meaningful way. Of course, one could easily think of exceptions, such as miscommunication or intentional ambiguity, but by and large the process of understanding language involves the recognition of coherency to the degree that the purpose of the utterance is accomplished. As defined here, *coherence* has to do with the sense that the reader makes of the text and should not to be confused with *cohesion*. Though coherence is inseparable from the text, it is not inherent within the text but is rather "the outcome of *cognitive processes* among text users."²¹ One may sometimes speak of a text (not

¹⁹ Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 131.

²⁰ Tim Bulkeley, "Cohesion, Rhetorical Purpose and the Poetics of Coherence in Amos 3," *ABR* 47 (1999), 17.

²¹ Robert-Alain de Beaugrande and Wolfgang Ullrich Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics*

possessing coherence, but the concept is better understood as the product of a reader's interaction with the text. A text can be recognised as coherent, therefore, "if, for a certain hearer on a certain hearing/reading, he or she is able to fit its different elements into a single overall mental representation."²² This means that a given text may be coherent for one reader and not another, or indeed coherent for one reader at one time but not at another time. In short, coherence is a mental phenomenon produced through interaction with a text, but is itself not graphically-represented.

Noam Chomsky's famous sentence illustrates that coherence is not the same thing as grammaticalness, since a sentence can be fully grammatical while also incoherent: *Colourless green ideas sleep furiously*.²³ Though this sentence follows an orderly grammatical pattern and can be diagrammed easily, it lacks semantic meaningfulness and is an example of something known as a collocational clash. However, it is important to appreciate the possibility that the reader can create coherency even where it may not have been intended. Indeed, given the expectation that a passage is a text, readers will go to great lengths to interpret the passage. As one linguist put it, "interpreters appear to operate under a will to cohere."²⁴ In the case of written discourse, even texts with comparatively low numbers of cohesive

(London: Longman, 1981), 6; emphasis added.

²² Dooley and Levinsohn, *Analyzing Discourse*, 11.

²³ Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (Paris: Mouton, 1957), 15. His point in using this example is that "grammatical" does not imply "meaningful" in a semantic sense. Neither can grammar be identified with probability of occurrence in a given language. Grammar as defined by Chomsky is independent of meaning and therefore not a helpful category by which to analyse syntax, a claim within his larger linguistic theory which merit must be discussed elsewhere.

²⁴ Robert Hopper, "Interpretation as Coherence Production," in *Conversational Coherence: Form, Structure, and Strategy*, ed. R. Craig and K. Tracy (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1983), 81–82, quoted in Marc Brettler, "The 'Coherence' of Ancient Texts," in *Gazing on the Deep: Ancient Near Eastern and Other Studies in honor of Tzvi Abusch*, ed. Jeffrey Stackert, Barbara Nevling Porter, and David Wright (Bethesda, MD: CDL, 2010), 414.

ties benefit from the reader's *expectation* of coherence, since the reader works to create coherency or "find" meaning, even if it was not intended by the author.

To take Chomsky's nonsensical statement again, one could imagine—given the right setting—a discourse context where the sentence is, indeed, coherent. Perhaps the speaker is dismissively declaring that the political policies of an environmentalist group are uninteresting yet difficult to ignore. In fact, Chomsky's sentence has its own reception history, which includes poems written for the very purpose of providing a literary context in which it becomes meaningful.²⁵

Consider an example that demonstrates the importance of context, in this case non-linguistic, but rather situational:

- 1) Emma: Would you like me to bring you a cup of coffee?
James: That would keep me awake!

To determine whether James's answer is affirmative or negative—that is, the intent of the locution, to borrow speech-act terminology—it is necessary to have an idea of the situational context (in addition to body language and tone of voice). If, on the one hand, the two speakers are students up late at night cramming for an exam the next morning, then the assumed answer is positive. In this case, the illocution is a positive affirmation of the question. If, on the other hand, James is trying to relax one evening for an early-morning job interview the next day, then the assumed answer is negative. The illocution is a negative answer to the question. This example shows that a single sentence (*That would keep me awake!*) given in two different situational contexts can

²⁵ See the appendix in Manfred Jahn, "'Colorless Green Ideas Sleep Furiously': A Linguistic Test Case and its Appropriations," in *Literature and Linguistics: Approaches, Models, and Applications: Studies in Honour of Jon Erickson*, ed. Marion Gymich, Ansgar Nüenning, and Vera Nüenning (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2002), 47–60, which provides five poems which incorporate the sentence in creative, and some rather ingenious, ways.

have exactly opposite illocutionary meanings, highlighting the importance of situational context for interpretation.

This linguistic phenomenon has been called *implicature*, that is the act of meaning or implying one thing by saying something else.²⁶ So in example (1), James said merely that drinking coffee would prevent sleep. However the implicature of this utterance varies depending on the situational context: in the first scenario, the implicature is affirmative, i.e. an acceptance of the offer; in the second scenario, the implicature is negative, i.e. a rejection of the offer. The point to stress here is that a speaker cannot be fully understood without knowing both what they have said *and* what they have implied. In addition to the situational context, the extent of implicature is wide-reaching, including figures of speech like irony, hyperbole, understatement, metonymy, and metaphor.²⁷ What ties these literary devices together in terms of implicature is that they all state something other than what they imply, and in ideal cases the reader/hearer is able to make the adjustment from statement to implicature, not in isolation, but based on additional contextual information.

Chomsky's sentence shows that even though the original speaker intended no coherent meaning, it is imaginable that given the right situation the hearer could discern coherence. And both Chomsky's sentence and the coffee example illustrate the unavoidable (though not necessarily hopeless) indeterminacy of language and the importance of context (co-text [literary] and situational [external] context) for communication. To return to the main point, coherence is essentially a cognitive

²⁶ Wayne Davis, "Implicature," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014), ed. Edward N. Zalta. Cited 12 Oct, 2017. Online: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/implicature/>.

²⁷ Ibid.

phenomenon, which largely depends on context, i.e. elements external to the isolated sentence.

One of the primary ways in which a text conveys coherence (or, more precisely, allows a reader to recognise coherence) is through literary *cohesion*, the "use of linguistic means to signal coherence."²⁸ In contrast to coherence, which as defined above is a product of the reader's encounter with the text, cohesion is a textual phenomenon. As a text-linguistic term, cohesion refers to "the ways in which the components of the surface structure of a text—words, phrases, sentences—are linguistically connected within a sequence. That is, how one sentence is linked to the next and how the elements in one part of the text are connected to those in others."²⁹ A pair of elements related in this way constitute a *cohesive tie*. The type and degree of cohesion varies widely, depending on the text. For example, a magazine issue or anthology may have little cohesion between its units, since each article is a separate composition with a different author and content. Yet even the various articles in a magazine typically cohere at a broad, thematic level around an interest such as current events or fitness.

In their foundational study *Cohesion in English*, Halliday and Hasan describe the phenomenon of literary cohesion as a major component of "texture," that is in distinguishing a text from a random assortment of unrelated sentences:

A text has texture, and this is what distinguishes it from something that is not a text. . . If a passage of English containing more than one sentence is perceived as a text, there will be certain linguistic features present in that

²⁸ Dooley and Levinsohn, *Analyzing Discourse*, 13. For the distinction between cohesion and coherence, see also Waldemar Gutwinski, *Cohesion in Literary Texts* (Paris: Mouton, 1976), 26.

²⁹ Berlin, "Lexical Cohesion," 29–30.

passage which can be identified as contributing to its total unity and giving it texture.³⁰

Halliday and Hasan describe demonstrable elements in the text which contribute to cohesion, which is a constituent element of a coherent text, whether English, Hebrew, or any other language.³¹

The distinction between coherence as the result of a mental process more subjective in nature, and cohesion as the effect of linguistic signs more objective in nature is, in my view, conceptually helpful. However, linguists have problematised this distinction by showing how the two concepts are not as distinct as they are described by Halliday and Hasan. The distinction is, according to Ted Sanders and Wilbert Spooren, partly helpful yet overly simplistic. While making a similar distinction between "mental representation" (coherence) and "overt linguistics signals" (cohesion), they argue that the connectedness of discourse includes *both* elements, not simply the latter.³² This conclusion is justified, at least in part, because a discourse sequence can be coherent without having any explicit cohesive ties. In other words, a text need not be cohesive to be coherent. For example, the sentence pair,

- 2) Ben was disappointed. It was raining.

³⁰ Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion*, 2.

³¹ Most literary texts display cohesion in the majority of their constituent sentences. However, cohesion is neither a necessary nor a sufficient cause for a coherent text. That is, a brief text can be coherent without cohesive devices (see Berlin, "Lexical Cohesion," 30 n. 4). Alternatively, a series of sentences can contain cohesive devices yet lack coherence, a phenomenon Enkvist calls "pseudo-coherence" ("Coherence, Pseudo-Coherence, and Non-Coherence," in *Reports on Text Linguistics: Semantics and Cohesion*, ed. Jan-Ola Östman [Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 1978], 110–11). For example:

"The discussions between the presidents ended last week. A week has seven days. Every day I feed my cat. Cats have four legs. The cat is on the mat. Mat has three letters." It is only superficial cohesion that connects the terms *week*, *week*, *days*, *day*, *cat*, *cats*, and so on.

³² Ted Sanders and Wilbert Spooren, "Discourse and Text Structure," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. Dirk Geeraerts and Hubert Cuyckens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 919.

is easy enough to understand, even though it has no overt linguistic signal to connect the sentences. The mere juxtaposition implies a causal idea: Ben was disappointed *because* it was raining.³³ Because of this absence, Sanders and Spooren argue for understanding the connectedness of discourse as *both* a mental activity and a network of linguistic features. Nonetheless, similar to the definition proposed above, for them coherence is not a textual property, but instead a product of language users who "establish coherence by relating the different information units in the text."³⁴

Whereas in their analysis of cohesion, Halliday and Hasan include only conjunctive relations that are explicitly signalled, that is represented by overt linguistic signs (i.e. *hypotaxis*, the "joining of two clauses or phrases by means of an overt function word that indicates the syntactic-semantic relationship between the two"³⁵), these same semantic relationships are frequently lexically unmarked (*parataxis*), especially in poetry.³⁶ In fact, explicit junction signals are rarely necessary to signal the relationship between clauses. This is explained in part by the linguistic principle known as "Behaghel's Law," which states that "items that belong together mentally are grouped together syntactically."³⁷ Though the relationship

³³ This inference is itself dependent on "world knowledge." To interpret this implicit causal relationship, the reader must hold the prior assumption that rainy weather is particularly likely to cause disappointment, perhaps because most many people dislike getting wet when participating in outdoor activities. However, there remains the possibility that further background information would change this inference. For example, perhaps Ben was disappointed about something entirely unrelated to the rain, but the rain simply contributed to his bad mood. In this case, the relationship is not causal, but additive.

³⁴ Sanders and Spooren, "Discourse and Text Structure," 919.

³⁵ Robert Holmstedt, "Hypotaxis," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, ed. Geoffrey Khan. Cited 11 Nov 2017. Online: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2212-4241_ehl_EHLL_COM_00000383.

³⁶ J. Blake Couey notes that biblical Hebrew prophetic poetry displays, on the whole, less parataxis than other corpora within biblical Hebrew poetry, although its line groups marked with a conjunction *wāw* or without marker still outnumber its line groups with explicit syntactic markers (*Reading the Poetry of First Isaiah: The Most Perfect Model of the Prophetic Poetry* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015], 116).

³⁷ Brian MacWhinney, "Processing: Universals," in vol. 3 of *International Encyclopedia of*

remains open to interpretation, the fact remains that without factors suggesting otherwise (such as a signalled break), some type of conceptual relation is assumed between the two adjacent elements. Thus, though not technically qualifying as a cohesive tie, juxtaposition or close proximity can suggest a cohesive relationship, albeit one open to different interpretations. The text analysis below is primarily interested in overt linguistic signals but will also consider unmarked conjunctive relations, sometimes called *coherence relations*.

I have found the categories of Halliday and Hasan to be an effective starting point, which has been adapted in two ways for the present purposes. First, necessary adjustments have been made for the unique properties of Hebrew. Though many cohesive relationships exist across languages, every language forms cohesive ties with its own range of devices, and there are a number of significant differences between the ways English creates cohesive ties and the ways that Hebrew does so.³⁸ For example, cohesive relationships will be affected by the gendered verbs of Hebrew (versus non-gendered English verbs). Second, the insights of Sanders and Spooren (along with others who discuss coherence relations) have been incorporated into the following analysis. While the focus of this study of Isa 24–27 will be on the linguistic signals of cohesion, the working assumption is that these signals are not the only means by which a reader recognises or creates coherence.

One possible objection to this proposal is that the quest for literary cohesion presupposes its conclusion, in a sense, begging the question methodologically. That

Linguistics, ed. W. Bright (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 276; cited in Dooley and Levinsohn, *Analyzing Discourse*, 15.

³⁸ Dooley and Levinsohn give a list of cross-linguistic types of cohesion (*Analyzing Discourse*, 13).

is, if one is determined to see "unity" in a text, one will almost inevitably find it. Indeed, "the question always haunts the enterprise [of literary criticism]: is the unity of the text that these readings celebrate one created by the reader, or found there?"³⁹ This creates the possibility of an evidence selection bias, in which one only attends to those elements which supports the hypothesis and ignores or fails to notice those elements which challenge the hypothesis.⁴⁰ On the one hand, this is a fair critique. Indeed, if this project were attempting to establish an original (genetic) unity, then one would rightly suspect a Procrustean framework that sought to smooth out discontinuities in the text towards the desired end. However, it is neither the goal nor the foreseen conclusion of the study to establish an original, authorial unity. There is here an important distinction between authorial unity and coherence. Whereas the former is a historical and authorial concern relating to the literary history of a text, the latter is a readerly concern relating to the sense that readers (ancient or modern) make of a text.⁴¹ The working presupposition is that Isa 24–27 is a coherent text, simply in its givenness, and that literary cohesion can help explain *how* this is perceived to be the case.

On the other hand, this critique is valid only insofar as it pertains to any text, since the assumption of coherence is an integral part of communication (written or

³⁹ Margaret M. Mitchell, "Rhetorical and New Literary Criticism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies*, ed. J. Lieu and J.W. Rogerson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 628.

⁴⁰ A similar objection may arise with redaction criticism, namely that the method itself produces the results for which it claims to search (rather than facilitates discovery). Ideally, redactional analysis first attempts to read a given text as a coherent whole, identifies places where a coherent reading is problematic, and explains these "seams" in terms of editorial activity. However, the inherent subjectivity in the process of identifying discontinuity risks creating disjunctions in a text where they do not exist. In short, the method generates the results.

⁴¹ See Marc Zvi Brettler, "The 'Coherence' of Ancient Texts," in *Gazing on the Deep: Ancient Near Eastern and Other Studies in Honor of Tzvi Abusch*, ed. Jeffrey Stackert et al. (Bethesda, MD: CDL, 2010), 418.

non-written). The human mind is able to make sense of quite unrelated sentences, *given that* they are presented as a "text." Moreover, the textual phenomenon of cohesion is not simply present or absent, but rather present in varying degrees. The aim here, therefore, is not to simply establish *that* the text contains literary connectedness, but rather how it does so and to what degree. So, in one sense, this challenge is a legitimate one, but is one that can be levelled against most forms of communication. This is a matter for the philosophy of language, but the point is that any method of interpretation has its own interests, and the conclusions which it reaches will, to some degree, reflect those interests.

2.2. Cohesive Ties in Biblical Hebrew

Cohesion is demonstrated in a variety of ways, and as with most taxonomic systems, there is a degree of subjectivity in the identification of its categories. This need not detain us too much, as the overall analysis of cohesion is not dependent on the groupings or the particular terminology chosen. Cohesion can obtain across any length of text, from within a single clause or line of poetry, to across large spans of text. On the shorter side are poetic parallel relationships (whether syntactical, semantic, or both), which tend to extend across a short length of text. So, for example, Watson suggests that the word pairs so common in Hebrew and Ugaritic help draw the lines (or, for internal [i.e. intra-colon] parallelism, the two halves of the line) together.⁴² An example of cohesion across a long span of text is the repetition of the phrase *תעלת הברכה העליונה אל [ב] מסלת שדה כובס* (*the trench of the upper pool on*

⁴² Wilfred G. E. Watson, "Internal Parallelism in Classical Hebrew Verse," *Bib* 66 (1985), 373–74. These word pairs can even be doubled, as in Amos 5:15–וָאִהְבּוּ טוֹב–שָׂנְאוּ רָע (*Hate evil and love good*).

the washer's field road) in Isa 7:3 and 36:1. The specificity of the repetition, even with many intervening chapters, invites the reader to compare the two kings (Ahaz and Hezekiah) and their responses to YHWH's word in the face of political crisis.

2.2.1. Reference

The first main category for Halliday and Hasan is *reference*. Reference terms are those which 'instead of being interpreted semantically in their own right . . . make reference to something else for their interpretation.'⁴³ A reference item directs the reader elsewhere for its semantic content, thus creating a reference relation with its referent. There are a variety of ways in which a tie can function referentially, but they fall within one of two broad types: endophora (cohesive) and exophora (non-cohesive).

Endophora describes reference *within* a text and includes both anaphora and cataphora. Anaphora and cataphora often describe the function of pronouns, with anaphora referring back in a linear reading, and cataphora forward. Both of these variations of endophora can function cohesively, but anaphora does so more consistently, often over a larger span of text. This directional element can be simple reference with an anaphoric pronoun ("The man with the yellow hat . . . *He* . . ."). However, pronouns are not the only type of word with referential ability. Referential relations may include entire sentences or paragraphs (e.g. [positive argument] + *Conversely* [negative argument], where "conversely" refers to the entirety of the preceding argument).⁴⁴ Cataphora, because it leaves an "empty place," may require

⁴³ Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion*, 31.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 15–17.

more energy on the part of the reader, and usually functions across a relatively short distance such as a single sentence. Though cataphora has a limited cohesive function, a writer can harness its rhetorical possibilities such as adding a degree of mystery or raising a problem to the surface of the text that demands resolution, thus propelling the reader into the poem or story.⁴⁵ Graham Greene's novel *Brighton Rock*, for example, opens with the sentence: "Hale knew, before he had been in Brighton three hours, that they meant to murder him." The sentence immediately grabs the reader's attention, partly because of the term "murder," but also because of the cataphoric pronoun "they" (the possible murderers), which demands resolution.

In contrast to endophora, which operates within the textual world, the other type of reference—*exophora*—constitutes a tie between the text and something outside the text (comparable to situational context). Thus, when the text refers to (or assumes) something in the non-textual environment, the reference relationship is exophoric. For example, the exclamation "Go faster!" if shouted by someone riding in a car, refers to something outside the text—namely the speed of the vehicle in which the speaker is riding at the time the sentence is uttered. The word *faster* is an example of comparative reference (a subtype of reference which will be discussed further below), but in this case is not functioning cohesively within a text, since it refers to something outside its textual environment.

Another common form of exophora is known as world-knowledge (or extra-linguistic knowledge). This type of exophoric reference relies on the reasonable assumption that the reader has a certain knowledge or awareness of something, even

⁴⁵ Beaugrande and Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics*, 61.

if it is not drawn from the immediate textual or physical environment (see example [2] above). An example of world-knowledge is the mention of a well-known entity, such as the sun or the moon, used with the definite article (also in biblical Hebrew, *הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ* and *הַיָּרֵחַ*). Because there is only one sun (unless you are reading an astronomical or science fiction text), the writer can reasonably assume that the reader is able to identify the sun to which they are referring. In most cases, the definite article signals to the reader that the noun to which it is attached should be identifiable in some way, often from a prior occurrence within the text.⁴⁶ In the case of the term *הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ*, the definite article signals the knowability of the referent, although not from the literary context. Instead, the reader knows from extra-linguistic experience that there is only one sun and one moon, so the definite article indicates that the referent of the noun should be known by world-knowledge.⁴⁷

The historical and cultural background of texts can be considered an aspect of exophora. For Isa 24–27 in particular, a number of exophoric references have been proposed and defended, based on reconstructed historical background. Perhaps the most focal instance of this is the widely debated "city of chaos" in Isa 24:10, which some believe refers externally to a particular defeated city, or even to an Assyrian outpost within Jerusalem.⁴⁸ Regardless of the plausibility of such proposals, the point here is that many commentators of Isa 24–27 identify the referent of the terms *עִיר*

⁴⁶ There are other functions for the definite article, e.g. definite of abstract or generic noun (Bill Arnold and John Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 28–32).

⁴⁷ A more specific label for this particular use of the definite article is "monadic" or "solitary" (Ibid., 31).

⁴⁸ Hays and Irvine, *Eight-Century Prophet*, 296.

and קרייה exophorically. Both types of reference, endophora and exophora, are important for interpretation, but only endophora is cohesive in the literary sense.

The three main types of referential cohesion, which is always endophoric, are pro-forms, demonstrative, and comparative:

Pro-forms. Pro-forms are words, including pronouns, that substitute for other words, phrases, clauses, or sentences, whose meaning is recoverable from either the literary context or situational ("extralinguistic") context.⁴⁹ All languages have a class of pro-forms which, by eliminating unnecessary repetition, increase language economy.⁵⁰ And though their use may at times result in imprecision or ambiguity, these forms can actually *increase* precision, and they serve an important role in cohesion.⁵¹ Like English, Hebrew makes use of pronouns, but also employs pro-adverbs such as שם (*there*). Other pro-forms include the pro-verb *do*, which in British English replaces and represents a verb with more content. However, because Hebrew verbs are inflected for person, gender, and number, typically making the independent pronoun optional (known as "pro-drop"), a verb occurring with a subject pronoun is a

⁴⁹ Eugene Loos, et al., ed. "What is a Pro-Form?" in *SIL Glossary of Linguistics* (Dallas: SIL International DigitalResources, 2003). Beaugrande and Dressler define pro-forms as "economical, short words empty of their own particular content, which can stand in the surface text in place of more determinate, content-activating expressions. . . . [which] allow text users to keep content current in active storage without having to restate everything" (*Introduction to Text Linguistics*, 60). See also Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (London: SPCK, 1989), 24.

⁵⁰ English has three classes of personal reference: personal pronouns, possessive determiners (i.e. possessive adjectives), and possessive pronouns (Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion*, 43). Biblical Hebrew, however, has only two forms of pronouns (independent and suffixed).

⁵¹ For example, *John took Mary to the dance. John was left all alone*, repeats the proper name *John*, but it is not clear that there are not actually two Johns. If the writer wanted to convey with certainty that there is only one person named John, then an (anaphoric) pronoun would be used: *John took Mary to the dance. He was left all alone*. In this case, the use of a pro-form actually decreases ambiguity (Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion*, 281).

marked construction and generally conveys something besides or in addition to reference, e.g. contrast, circumstance, or marking the beginning of a new unit.⁵²

Pro-forms include the independent pronouns הוא (personal reference 3ms), הם/המה (personal reference 3mp), היא (personal reference 3fs), and the pronominal suffixes such as -הו (which can function as a 3ms possessive determiner, *his*). It should be noted that generally only third person pronouns serve a cohesive function, since first and second person references are exophoric as they refer to the speaker or audience, both of which are external to the text; the exception is with direct quotation. The following clause is an example of simple antecedent reference, since the 3ms pronoun הוא refers to the proper name (אברהם) in the preceding sentence:

- 3) And *he* [Abraham] was standing by them under the tree while they ate.

והוא עמד עליהם תחת העץ ויאכלו
(Gen 18:8b)

Another means through which pro-forms express cohesion in Hebrew is consistency of the inflection of verbal forms (person, gender, and number expressed in the morphology of the inflected finite verb). While this morphological tag may appear in a variety of ways (e.g. as a prefix or a suffix), with respect to cohesion, the inflection functions in the same way as as a personal reference pronoun. This kind of antecedent reference can, of course, continue for a large stretch of discourse, creating a "network of lines of reference," all of which strongly contribute to the cohesion of a text.⁵³ Consider this example of the pl. verb conjugation (without an explicit subject), which refers back to the pl. antecedent בני ישראל:

⁵² Cf. Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, rev. and trans. T. Muraoka (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2006) §146; *GKC* §135.

⁵³ Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion*, 52.

- 4) And *they* [the sons of Israel] *shall fearfully approach* YHWH and his goodness in the latter days.

ופחדו אל יהוה ואל טובו באחרית הימים
(Hos 3:5b)

Alternatively, the disruption of these reference networks is a notorious problem in biblical interpretation.

Cohesion can function concurrently with other rhetorical functions.⁵⁴ For example, an independent pronoun can function referentially while also being emphatic or contrastive:

- 5) And the gift passed over in front, *but he* [Jacob] spent that night in the camp.

ותעבר המנחה על פניו והוא לן בלילה ההוא במחנה
(Gen 32:21)

In this example, the personal pronoun הוא refers back to the proper name Jacob (v. 9), thereby creating a cohesive tie with an antecedent part of the text. But the use of the pronoun, in combination with word-order, also marks a disjunction which indicates a contrast between the movements of the company of Jacob and his "gift," and those of Jacob himself. A similar cohesive tie with additional discourse function can be seen in this narrative excerpt:

- 6) And they said to Moses: *you* speak with us, and we will listen; let not God speak to us, lest we die.

ויאמרו אל משה דבר אתה עמנו ונשמעה ואל ידבר עמנו אלהים פן נמות
(Exod 20:19)

⁵⁴ Dooley and Levinsohn list three different tasks for a language's system of reference. The first is semantic, i.e. the task of identifying references unambiguously, which is most focal for cohesion. The second is "discourse-pragmatic," which is the task of signalling the activation status and prominence of the referents or the actions they perform. And the third is "processing," which is the task of overcoming disruptions in the flow of information. Included in this is the use of identifiers with more information, such as a full noun phrase or proper name, to demarcate new narrative units. In this case, even though a simple pronoun may have been just an unambiguous as as proper name, the proper name is used at the beginning of a paragraph to signal the beginning of a new narrative section (*Analyzing Discourse*, 56).

In the second example, the second-person pronoun *אתה* functions emphatically (or, more precisely, as *antithetical contrast*⁵⁵) along with its inflected verb. It also functions as a reference to *Moses*, thus creating referential cohesion (this is possible for second-person, in this case, because it is quoted speech). The point here is simply that a cohesive word or phrase is not limited to this cohesive function, but may also serve other purposes in the discourse.

Demonstrative Reference. A second type of referential cohesion is expressed through the linguistic group of demonstratives (often called deixis), and identifies the referent by its spacial or temporal proximity. This can be accomplished either adverbially, pronominally, or adjectivally.⁵⁶ The demonstrative adverb typically modifies whole clauses, the pronoun functions independently as a "head," and the adjective modifies a noun, thus specifying the location of a particular item.

Adverbs with demonstrative force include *זה* (*here*), *פה* (*here*), *הנה* (*hither, to here*), *עתה* (*now*), *כה/כן* (*thus*).⁵⁷ Included in the adverbial use of the demonstrative is the definite article, particularly with nouns referring to the present time.⁵⁸ The pronominal and adjectival demonstratives are usually associated with near and remote location: *זאת* (*this* [f.s.]); *זה* (*this* [m.s.]); *אלה* (*these* [c.p.]); *היא* (*that* [f.s.]); *הוא* (*that* [m.s.]); *הן* (*those* [f.p.]); *הם* (*those* [m.p.]). Strictly speaking, the only true demonstrative pronoun in biblical Hebrew is the term *זה* and its inflected forms.⁵⁹ The English far demonstrative *that, those* does not have an exact equivalent in

⁵⁵ Cf. Joüon and Muraoka, *Grammar*, 146a.

⁵⁶ Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion*, 57–8.

⁵⁷ Cf. Joüon and Muraoka, *Grammar*, 102h.

⁵⁸ Arnold and Choi list Deut 29:14; Num 22:8; Jer 28:16; and Exod 9:27 (*Syntax*, 2.6.6). Note, however, that these occurrences tend to be exophoric and therefore not cohesive.

⁵⁹ There are a few rare forms of the demonstrative that are not of particular interest to us here (e.g. *הַלְזֶה* in *הַלְזֶה הָאִישׁ הַלֵּוִי*, *that man* [Gen 24:65]).

Hebrew. The third person pronoun (הוא) technically conveys identity (*the same*), but is used as a weak (or "quasi") demonstrative.⁶⁰ It is worth noting for our purposes that the true demonstrative זה can be either anaphoric or cataphoric, while הוא/הוא can only be anaphoric in reference. Another distinction between the true demonstrative and the quasi-demonstrative is that הַזֶּה tends to convey a stronger deictic force than הָהוּא.⁶¹

As pronouns, the demonstratives function substantively and are most often anaphoric, but can also be cataphoric.⁶² It is worth noting that demonstratives can be exophoric, and are in this case not cohesive. The reoccurring expression in the historical books עד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה (e.g. Gen 32:33; *until this day*; see also 2 Sam 18:20) refers exophorically to *this* day, meaning *today* (= the time of writing) and is therefore not cohesive.

Comparative Reference. The final type of referential cohesion is comparison, which by its very nature makes reference to another item: "A thing cannot just be 'like'; it must be 'like something.'"⁶³ The category of comparison includes identity (sameness) and similarity, but also difference and non-identity. Biblical Hebrew has various ways of conveying the comparative relationship, using verbs (משל, *to be*

⁶⁰ Joüon and Muraoka, *Grammar*, 36a–e; 143j; Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 308–9.

⁶¹ Waltke and O'Connor, *Syntax*, 309.

⁶² Cataphoric demonstratives include אלה הדברים (*These are the words . . .*) of the opening of the book of Deuteronomy, and אלה תולדות (*These are the generations . . .*) of Genesis (e.g. 2:4; 6:9; 10:1). The Genesis *toledot* play an important cohesive role in the book, by linking the named subject (progenitor) and preceding narratives to the material that follows about the offspring (Matthew A. Thomas, *These are the Generations: Identity, Covenant, and the 'toledot' Formula*, [New York: T&T Clark, 2011], 24). The *toledot* formulae have, of course, played an interesting role in source-critical inquiry, and scholars are divided regarding the referential direction of the formula's anomalous occurrence at Gen 2:4. (i.e. as subscription or superscription) (ibid., 38–41).

⁶³ Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion*, 78.

like), the preposition כּ – and כאשר clauses, the מן-preposition construction, and the adverb כּן (*thus*). Consider these examples of comparative reference:

7) [Comparative particle]

And there shall be a highway . . . from Assyria *like* there was for Israel on the day when they came up from the land of Egypt.

והיתה מסלה . . . מאשור כאשר היתה לישראל ביום עלתו מארץ מצרים
(Isa 11:16)

8) [מן construction]

Now Israel loved Joseph *more than* [he loved] any of his other sons.

וישראל אהב את יוסף מכל בניו
(Gen 37:3)

9) [Adjective]

There is a *different* spirit with him [Caleb].

היתה רוח אחרת עמו
(Num 14:24)

In example (9), the comparative adjective אחרת (m. אחר) indicates that Caleb's spirit is to be contrasted with another spirit(s) found in the preceding narrative context. This is the spirit which was with those who put YHWH to the test (see vv. 21–23). In this case, the negative comparison indicates cohesion since it relates the description of Caleb with the preceding description of those who, contrastingly, did not receive divine blessing.

10) And Pharaoh called for the wise men and sorcerers, and they too—the magicians of Egypt—did *the same* by their enchantments.

ויקרא גם פרעה לחכמים ולמכשפים ויעשו גם הם חרטמי מצרים בלהטיהם כן
(Exod 7:11)

In this example, the particle כּן adverbially modifies the verb ויעשו (lit. *they did thusly*), and compares the actions of the Egyptian magicians to those of Aaron—namely, throwing down his staff, which became a serpent—as described in the preceding sentence (v. 10). Despite the different syntactical means by which

comparison can be expressed, each of the examples above serves the same cohesive function, namely marking the relationship between two elements in a discourse by means of comparative reference.

2.2.2. *Substitution and Ellipsis*

The second major textual phenomenon which contributes to literary cohesion is substitution. Substitution is essentially the replacement of one linguistic item with another, usually one with the same structural function within its clause. Substitution, along with ellipsis, the substitution of a blank space, differ from referential cohesion in that they work at the lexico-grammatical, rather than semantic, level. In other words, whereas reference is a relation in the *meaning*, substitution is a relation in *wording*.⁶⁴ Another difference between the two is that reference often looks outside the text (=exophora), whereas substitution is almost always endophoric and therefore cohesive.

Substitution can take place at the word or clausal level. Note the nominal substitution in the following examples:

- 11) I picked up some interesting seashells along the beach. *This one* is my favourite.

Similar to the English numeral *one*, Hebrew can use אחד to substitute for a noun:⁶⁵

- 12) There will be five cities . . . that will swear to YHWH of hosts. *One* will be called the "city of the sun."

יהיו חמש ערים . . . ונשבעות ליהוה צבאות עיר ההרס יאמר לאחת
(Isa 19:18)

⁶⁴ Ibid., 88, 90.

⁶⁵ The word אחד can, of course, function as a numeral, or to indicate an indefinite noun (which is quite different from its cohesive use as a substitution). For indeterminate use, see e.g. Judg 13:1; 1 Sam 1:1.

The term *אחת* substitutes for the noun *ערים* (or more accurately, the phrase *one of the cities*).⁶⁶ This example also illustrates how substitution introduces a new modifying element; i.e. some kind of contrast from the presupposed item ("the meaning of the nominal group containing the substitute is never exactly identical with that of the nominal group that is presupposed").⁶⁷ In this case, the "one" refers to a *certain* city from among the five previously mentioned.

Ellipsis is related to substitution and can be considered the substitution of nothing. It is an especially important feature in biblical Hebrew poetic parallelism, occurring when a structurally-necessary element is omitted and therefore must be supplied from the (usually immediate) context.⁶⁸ In other words, something is left unsaid, but is presumably understood since the necessary information is provided in the context.⁶⁹ Because ellipsis involves recourse to another part of the text, it too is almost always cohesive.⁷⁰ It must be stressed that not just any recourse to another

⁶⁶ This illustration shows that a substitute can differ from its presupposed item in number (Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion*, 91). However, *אחת* does match its related item in gender.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 95.

⁶⁸ This is a bit of an oversimplification, given that not every instance of ellipsis necessarily results in an incomplete surface structure. This psalmic verse illustrates the dual possibility of such cases:

פי ידבר חכמות My mouth will speak wisdom,
 והגות לבי תבונות but the murmuring of my heart understanding.
 (Ps 49:4)

(Cynthia Miller, "A Linguistic Approach to Ellipsis in Biblical Poetry," *BBR* 13.2 [2003], 256, 266). In this case, the grammar of the second line of the bicolon can be read in two different ways, and ellipsis is only one of these possibilities: 1) as a verbless clause: "and the murmuring of my heart [*is/will be*] understanding"; or 2) as a sentence fragment using verbal ellipsis: "and the murmuring of my heart [*will speak*] understanding." There is, therefore, nothing in the surface structure of this clause which requires it be elliptical. Miller's point is that, without precise knowledge of the possibilities and limits for ellipsis in biblical Hebrew, the interpreter must rely on mere intuition. On the other hand, a deeper awareness of the workings of ellipsis significantly reduces the amount of indeterminateness and ambiguity, or at least informs the reader of purposeful indeterminacy in poetry.

⁶⁹ In actual language use, ellipsis, like substitution, can be exophoric. For example, at a fruit stand a buyer might say, "I'll take two, please," referring elliptically to the watermelons for sale at the stand. However, in written language exophoric ellipsis is rare, since in this case there is no way to recover the elided element (see Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion*, 144).

⁷⁰ In biblical Hebrew, there are minor exceptions to the cohesive function of ellipsis. These include words which are so frequently elided that they are assumed, including some quantitative expressions using terms such as "day" or "year" (Arnold and Choi, *Syntax*, 192). E.g. "On exactly the

part of the text or to the reader's own evidence constitutes ellipsis, as this applies to "practically every sentence that is ever spoken or written, and would be of no help in explaining the nature of a text."⁷¹ Ellipsis is, more narrowly, the omission of structurally-necessary elements.

As is often the case in theoretical linguistics, there is debate regarding the precise definition and nature of ellipsis, though the approach here is "procedural," meaning simply that ellipsis is constituted only by a noticeable discontinuity of the surface text. In this approach, ellipsis occurs only in coordinating clauses, and the elided constituent has an antecedent which must be supplied. The remainder of the clause after the elided constituent is the "remnant," and the corresponding part of the antecedent clause is called the "correspondents."⁷² Thus in Isa 1:27,

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|--|
| 13) | ציון במשפט תפדה
ושביה בצדקה | Zion by justice will be redeemed,
 and her inhabitants by righteousness
 [will be redeemed]. |
|-----|--------------------------------|--|

tenth [day] of the seventh month" לעשירי לחדש השביעי (Lev 23:27). Though normally ellipsis is cohesive, note that the missing information is supplied *not* from the literary context (endophoric, and therefore cohesive) but from knowledge of the language (exophoric).

Other expressions habitually leave out a word, resulting in a seemingly new meaning for the verb (see Joüon and Muraoka, *Grammar*, 125y). For example, the expression *to forgive one's sins* uses the collocation נשא + ל + accusative noun (like עון or פשע). Thus, Ps 25:18b reads ונשא לכל חטאותי (*forgive all my sins*). However, the object is sometimes elided with the assumption that the reader will infer the correct meaning from typical language usage, *not* from an explicit element in the discourse context. The following are examples of the verb נשא with the object *sin* implied:

- | | | |
|----------------|--|---|
| נשאתה לעם הזה | | You have forgiven this people (Num 14:19) |
| ואל תשא להם | | Do not forgive them (Isa 2:9) |
| כי נשא אשא להם | | that I would certain forgive them (Hos 1:6) |

Another exception to cohesive ellipsis is elliptical protases or apodoses in conditional clauses (Gen 38:17b; Exod 32:32; cf. Joüon and Muraoka, *Grammar*, 167o, r). Therefore, although these are ellipses, these examples do not depend on another part of the discourse but rather on existing knowledge of how these constructions function.

⁷¹ Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion*, 143.

⁷² This terminology is from Cynthia L. Miller-Naudé, "Ellipsis: Biblical Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, ed. Geoffrey Khan. Cited 12 December 2017. Online: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2212-4241_ehl_EHLL_COM_00000543.

The antecedent is the verb תפדה, the remnant is the elliptical clause שביה בצדקה, and the correspondent is ציון במשפט.

An example of ellipsis frequently found in poetry is what James Kugel calls "ballasting." This type of parallelism consists of two lines, the second of which ("B") elides a certain constituent from the first ("A") and adds an extra element to compensate for the elided constituent.⁷³ Though the effect of the additional element varies, the result is more balanced length across the two lines. It is hardly necessary to give examples of ellipsis in biblical poetry, given its ubiquity in poetic texts. Notice, however, the particular "ballast" type of ellipsis in this opening Isaianic verse:

- | | | | | |
|-----|-----|------------------|--|--|
| 14) | "A" | ידע שור קנהו | | An ox knows its owner, |
| | "B" | וחמור אבוס בעליו | | and a donkey [knows] the trough of its master. |
| | | | | (Isa 1:3a) |

In this example, the "B" clause elides the verb (ידע) and adds a word to its constituent (אבוס), resulting in two lines of equal (three-word) length.

Even a single letter (i.e. an inseparable preposition) can be elided, especially in poetry. Normally, a preposition governing more than one object is repeated with each object. However, it can be elided, known sometimes as "preposition override" or in poetry as doing "double duty" or "gapping."⁷⁴ In the following poetic verse, the preposition כ occurs in the first line, but is elided in the second:

- | | | | |
|-----|----------------|--|--|
| 15) | יעשה חפצו בבבל | | He will accomplish his purpose <i>against</i> Babylon, |
| | וזרעו כשדי | | and his arm [will be <i>against</i>] the Chaldeans. |
| | | | (Isa 48:14b) |

⁷³ James Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 46. He notes that G. B. Gray called the phenomenon "compensation."

⁷⁴ Waltke and O'Connor, *Syntax*, 222–23.

Ellipsis and substitution tend to occur over relatively short distances. They are important features of poetic style, but contribute less to cohesion across a larger discourse.

2.2.3. Lexical Cohesion

The third major type of cohesion is created by word choice. Halliday and Hasan define lexical cohesion briefly as "the cohesive effect achieved by the selection of vocabulary" and identify two main subtypes: reiteration and collocation.⁷⁵ Reiteration involves the repetition of the same lexical item or related item which refers back to a lexical item. It includes verbatim repetition, (near-)synonym, superordinate, and general word. In most cases, a reiterated word is prefaced by a reference item like the definite article, indicating that the referent is known.

Recurrence. The most obvious type of lexical cohesion is recurrence of the same lexical item, i.e. a repeated word (as well as synonyms or near-synonyms).⁷⁶ This phenomenon may, of course, function in additional ways, e.g. as a *Leitwort*, indicating an important concept or theme. A reiterated lexeme does not require verbatim repetition for cohesive effect, but can include other forms from the same root.⁷⁷ For example, the tri-radical root כבד could appear in a discourse as a *qal*

⁷⁵ Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion*, 274.

⁷⁶ An exact synonym is rare, and the question of synonymy is debated in linguistics. Though the denotation of two closely-related words may be essentially identical, in practice there will be some difference in where or how the words are used (e.g. degree of formality). Languages exhibit a strong tendency to *avoid* synonymy, since absolute synonymy is inefficient and contradicts the assumption that there is a rational explanation of the choice of one word over another (see M.L. Murphy, "Synonymy," in *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, 2nd ed., ed. E.K. Brown and Anne Anderson [Boston: Elsevier, 2006], 377–78).

⁷⁷ In Halliday and Hasan's words, "A lexical item is not bound to a particular grammatical category, or to a particular morphological form" (*Cohesion*, 291). Beaugrande and Dressler (*Introduction to Text Linguistics*, 56) differ slightly in their terminology, calling the shift to a different word class (e.g. from adj. to noun, or verb to noun) *partial recurrence*. The idea is the same:

imperfect יכבד, but also in nominal or adjectival forms (כבוד, כבדה); any of these instances would contribute to lexical cohesion since the verbal root is repeated.⁷⁸

Though often the repeated element shares the same referent, this need not be the case. A repeated lexeme does not have to share the same referent to function cohesively. On the contrary, the two occurrences of the lexeme may be used in very different senses.⁷⁹ This may be intentional word-play, or inadvertent recurrence of lexical items with differing senses. In his examination of lexical cohesion in the Song of Songs, D. Dalwood observes that the noun דוד is repeated throughout the book, but does not always share the same referent, but instead the "reader interprets the term's sense in one setting based on a meaning it has acquired elsewhere in the text."⁸⁰

Superordination and General Noun. Lexical cohesion also obtains through the use of several similar relations, which can be grouped together: superordinate (a more general word [*furniture* is a superordinate of *sofa*; or אשה (*woman*) and אלמנה (*widow*)], hyponym (a subtype of another [*blue* is a hyponym of *colour*]),⁸¹ part-whole (*wheel-car*), general noun (*thing, idea, דבר*, etc.). As with recurrence, the fully cohesive effect is accomplished through the definite article (=anaphoric reference item) *plus* the noun itself.⁸²

recurrence is not confined to the same word class.

⁷⁸ Berlin, "Lexical Cohesion," 30.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 33.

⁸⁰ David Dalwood, "A Text of Songs? Some Observations Regarding Cohesion and Texture in the Song of Songs," *JNSL* 43 (2017), 9. According to Dalwood, the noun דוד within the Song most often refers to the man, but it is also applied to the woman (Song 7:14) as well as to the idea of lovemaking more generally, often with the pl. form (1:2, 4; 4:10; 5:1; 7:10 [9], 13 [12]).

⁸¹ Another term for *superordination* is *hyperonymy*, which is simply the converse of *hyponymy*. Cf. M.L. Murphy, "Hyponymy and Hyperonymy," in *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, 2nd ed., ed. E.K. Brown and Anne Anderson (Boston: Elsevier, 2006), 446–48.

⁸² See Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion*, 277, 281.

General nouns are those which refer to an entire major noun class. For example, *thing*, *person*, *stuff*, or *idea*. General nouns as cohesive agents are also referential—that is, the general noun has the same referent as the item which it presupposes and is therefore signalled by a reference item, frequently the definite article. Therefore, the boundary between lexical cohesion, especially the reiteration of a general word, and referential cohesion is blurry. In other words, a complex like "the + general noun" functions like an anaphoric reference.⁸³ One way that biblical Hebrew uses a reference item + general noun is הדבר הזה, which can refer back to an entire occurrence, situation, or oracle (cf. Deut 3:26). In such cases, the term דבר functions as a general noun and thus contributes to lexical cohesion in the text.

Collocation. A final type of lexical cohesion is collocation, the cooccurrence of two or more words that frequently appear in the same discourse context.⁸⁴ This pair or group of words belongs to the same lexical environment, and thereby contributes to textual cohesion. The import of this "habitual cooccurrence"⁸⁵ may have certain constraints such as genre. The paired word can, but need not, be semantically related, and there is no referential basis for the link. For example, *green* and *jealousy* are collocates of each other, yet are not semantically related (as are *green* and *blue*).⁸⁶ Or the verb "to steal" alone might evoke ideas of shoplifting, but

⁸³ Ibid., 275.

⁸⁴ The use of the term *collocation* here is slightly different than the often-used sense of "word pair" and is broader in view than the closely-bound words of a hendiadys. Collocation should also be distinguished from idiom, the meaning of which cannot be inferred from its constituent parts. In the typical use, if placed on a spectrum, free combinations would lie on one end, collocations in the centre, and idioms on the other end. Berlin distinguishes between *collocation* as "the occurrence of the parts of a pair or set at an unspecified distance within the same passage," and *juxtaposition*, "the occurrence of the parts of a pair next to each other or within the same phrase" (*The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008], 29-30).

⁸⁵ David Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, 6th ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 86.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

when collocated with "third" (or other baseball term), it takes on a completely different sense. Another type of collocational relation is ordered series such as numbers or days of the week, as well as collections like parts of the body. Collocations also include synonyms and even antonyms.

Collocational cohesion is perhaps more difficult to measure than the other types of lexical cohesion, but is nonetheless an important element in the cohesive relationships in a discourse, especially in impressionistic literary types. Since the corpora for biblical Hebrew is relatively small, as with lexical semantics, there will inevitably be overlooked instances of collocation simply because the extant body of biblical Hebrew is so limited. Sanders and Maat point out the difficulty with this understanding of lexical cohesion, because what one culture (or person) considers part of a lexical field, another culture may not. Moreover, they find Halliday and Hasan's guidance regarding the evaluation of collocation to be insufficient, namely that identification of collocation is driven primarily by common sense and the knowledge that language users have of the vocabulary of the language.⁸⁷ This critique is important, especially given the different understandings of "collocation," such as the connection between verb and certain prepositions (e.g. the expression נפל בחרב [to fall by the sword; cf. 2 Sam 1:12]). Thus in some cases, it is necessary to argue that two terms are indeed collocates.

An example of lexical collocation pertinent to prophetic literature is the noun נאם (*utterance*), which occurs in construct with the divine name in 96% of its 367

⁸⁷ T. Sanders and H.P. Maat, "Cohesion and Coherence: Linguistic Approaches," in vol. 2 of *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, ed. Keith Brown (London: Elsevier, 2006), 592; cf. Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion*, 290.

occurrences (נאם יהוה or נאם אדני יהוה), and is therefore a close collocate.⁸⁸ There are only a few exceptions to this use of the noun in the Hebrew Bible: "the oracle of Balaam" (six occurrences in Num 24), "the oracle of David" (twice in 2 Sam 23), "the utterance of transgression to the wicked" (Ps 36:1), and "the utterance of the man" (Prov 30:1). Collocation is not limited, however, to words in construct relationship or poetic parallel and, because it is free from structural constraints, it can obtain across larger stretches of text.

2.2.4. *Conjunction and Coherence Relations*

In the normal grammatical sense, *conjunctions* are connective particles which join words, phrases, and clauses (e.g. *because*, *or*, אם, או, ו, פן, כי). These particles are typically classed as either coordinating or subordinating depending on the type of clause they introduce. However, conjunctive cohesion does not refer to a particular part of speech or syntactical function, and while it frequently employs the conjunctive part of speech, it is a distinct use of the term and should not be confused with the grammatical sense. This is, in part, because other parts of speech (typically adverbs) can exhibit conjunctive cohesion.

Conjunctive cohesion is of a different nature than the preceding types of cohesion (reference, substitution and ellipsis, and lexical). Whereas these constitute mostly anaphoric relations which reach back to a specific element in the preceding text, with conjunction "we move into a different type of semantic relation, one which is no longer any kind of a search instruction, but a specification of the way in which

⁸⁸ Dean Forbes, "Collocation: Biblical Hebrew," in *The Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, 480.

what is to follow is systematically connected to what has gone before."⁸⁹ In the following sentence, notice the role that *then* plays:

- 16) With the end in sight, Rachel gave one final push. *Then*, as she crossed the finish line, she collapsed with exhaustion.

Instead of linking a single word or phrase (like *Rachel . . . she*), the conjunction joins whole clauses and sentences together. In the example above, *then* (a conjunctive adverb) temporally relates the entirety of the sentence that follows to the sentence that precedes.⁹⁰ Biblical Hebrew can use temporal conjunctions similarly:

- 17) *Then* Rezin king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war.

אז יעלה רצין מלך ארם ופקח בן רמליהו מלך ישראל ירושלם למלחמה
(2 Kgs 16:5)

Conjunctive relations may relate two sentences, but they may also relate paragraphs or larger sections. Besides temporal relation, there are a variety of other conjunction relationships, including causative, purpose, concessive, and contra-expectation.

It is important to note that one conjunctive particle (perhaps most notably, *wāw*) may function in a number of conjunctive relations, though in large part, context and word order will indicate the most appropriate interpretation. Conversely, as was mentioned above, conjunctive relations need not be formally marked, but may simply be the result of reasonable inference based on juxtaposition.

2.2.5. Structural and Morphosyntactic Cohesion

The final category of textual cohesion includes connections in a text which are formed through its structure, syntax, and inflections. This entails primarily the

⁸⁹ Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion*, 227.

⁹⁰ Conjunctions can, of course, function structurally at a sub-sentential level. Any compound subject, for instance, is an example of this conjunctive relation. These will not be considered here, since they work below the sentence level and therefore do not contribute to discourse cohesion.

repetition of grammatical constructions or sounds. This category was intentionally omitted from Halliday and Hasan's explanation of cohesion, but is included here because of the special role of form in poetic literature. Even though a structural reiteration such as poetic parallelism may not convey semantic cohesion, the repetition of the form nonetheless contributes to the "hanging together" of the poem. Moreover, poetry is more likely to tie form to meaning, sometimes called *iconicity*, that is an "outward resemblance between surface expressions and their content."⁹¹ We might also include word-play, including rhyme, pun, or alliteration, which strictly speaking are neither structural, syntactical, nor semantic. Isaiah 24–27 features extensive word play, which can serve a cohesive role.

3. Plan for Thesis

This overview of cohesive relations will serve as a guide for the following analysis of Isa 24–27. Chapter 3 will propose a working macro-structure for Isa 24–27 which will be the backbone for the study. On the basis of this macro-structure, I will then examine the constituent units of the composition for their own cohesive relations (Chapters 4–7), starting with smaller units and working towards the three main "movements." The final part of the analysis will consider cohesive ties across the whole of Isa 24–27, focusing on the importance these have for a coherent interpretation and for the significance and function of Isa 24–27 within the book of Isaiah (Chapters 8–9).

⁹¹ Beaugrande and Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics*, 56–7.

CHAPTER 3

THE LITERARY MACROSTRUCTURE OF ISAIAH 24–27

1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the literary structure of Isa 24–27 and to establish a working outline that serves the project's aim of analysing literary cohesion within the composition. It is concerned, in other words, with describing the structure of the text which best highlights the cohesive relationships within it, and which will best assist our efforts to understand the chapters as a coherent whole. The structure of Isa 24–27 has been a "source of significant problems"¹ and is characterised by an "overwhelming lack of consensus."² Such assessments could be easily multiplied, and they reflect the ongoing difficulty of the task. Even a brief survey of the literature shows a remarkable number of differing structure proposals and outlines of varying degrees of precision, yet these reach little agreement besides the obvious observation that the chapters contain mixed generic material.

The structure proposed here centres on that very observation, namely the alternation between different genres, presented as the alternation between prophetic announcement and response. However, it seeks to be sensitive to a variety of literary factors in addition to changes in genre, such as discourse markers and transition formulae, and conceptual (dis)continuity. Even if read with the intention of finding a

¹ T.C. Vriezen and A.S. van der Woude, "The Prophetic Literature," in *Ancient Israelite and Early Jewish Literature*, trans. Brian Doyle (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 323.

² Konrad D. Jenner, "Petucha and Setuma: Tools for Interpretation or Simply a Matter of Layout?: A Study of the Relations Between Layout, Arrangement, Reading and Interpretation of the Text in the Apocalypse of Isaiah (Isa. 24–27)," in *Studies in Isaiah 24–27*, ed. H.J. Bosman, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 100. See also Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27: A Commentary*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp, CC (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 447; and Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 31.

unifying factor(s), the series of prophetic announcements and responses are by no means univocal in their complexity and thematic richness. Given this lack of homogeneity, this pattern of prophetic statement and human response is a unique characteristic of Isa 24–27 and is, despite the many uncertainties of the text, a consistent and helpful way of understanding its structure. As a prophetic text, Isa 24–27 vacillates between divine word and human response. The text compels its readers to respond to the prophetic word—in praise, in lament, even in protest, but most importantly, in trust.

	<i>Prophetic Announcement</i>	<i>Response</i>
Movement 1 (24:1–25:5)	Announcement of Judgment and YHWH's Reign (24:1–23)	Hymn of Praise (25:1–5)
Movement 2 (25:6–26:21)	Announcement of YHWH's Banquet and Moab's Defeat (25:6–12)	Hymn of Trust (Future) (26:1–6) Prayer (Present) (26:7–21)
Movement 3 (27:1–13)	Announcement of Leviathan's Death and Vineyard's Life (27:1, 2–6) - - - Announcement of Return to Worship in Zion (27:12–13)	Explanation of Community's Plight (27:7–11)

Because cohesion works both within and across structural boundaries, and because literary coherence is, in part, a product of correctly identifying discourse boundaries, a structural framework is helpful if not imperative for the present aims. Structural analysis can, of course, work on different levels of discourse, so the term *macrostructure* is used here to clarify that units larger than the clause, sentence, or poetic colon are in view. The present discussion will first defend the identification of

chs. 24–27 as a distinct, though not isolated, unit within the book of Isaiah. The next section will provide a sketch of some representative scholarly approaches to its structure. The final section will, in conversation with existing proposals, propose and defend the above three-part structure for Isa 24–27 for the purpose of setting up our discussion of cohesive relations within the discourse.

2. Isaiah 24–27 as a Textual Unit

It is necessary at the outset to briefly justify the analysis of chs. 24–27 as a distinct unit within the book of Isaiah. Why not take chs. 24–26, for example,³ or chs. 13–24? Given the connections (lexical, thematic, and formal) between Isa 24–27 and other parts of the book, as well as the variety of highly disjunctive elements within the four chapters, it is not without question that chs. 24–27 constitute a single section. Blenkinsopp speaks for many in his assessment that chs. 24–27 are "a number of loosely connected passages of uneven length, the sequence of which manifests no immediately obvious logical order."⁴ In fact, one's first impression of these chapters may be that their arrangement is haphazard, an unexplainable miscellany of prophetic material that constantly shifts genre, speaker, addressee, time perspective, and tone.

The first observation that suggests these chapters form a unit is a *negative* statement, namely that they belong with neither the oracles (s. מִשָּׁע) about the nations that precede (chs. 13–23) nor with the woe (הוֹי) oracles directed toward Ephraim and

³ Cf. Wallace March, "A Study of Two Prophetic Compositions in Isaiah 24:1–27:1" (Th.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1966), esp. 187–98. March's "two compositions" are Isa 24:1–20 and 24:21–27:1. He considers ch. 27 (apart from v. 1) to be a separate literary unit.

⁴ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 346.

Judah that follow (28:1ff.). In view of the preceding chapters (13–23), there is a formal break at Isa 24:1. The so-called "oracles against the nations" of chs. 13–23 are characterised by the מִשָּׂא (*burden*) label and are interspersed with brief prose sections (e.g. 22:15–25).⁵ Moreover, each מִשָּׂא-oracle is directed toward a particular nation(s) or city-state, and together they form a collection of national oracles, comparable to that of most other prophetic books (e.g. Amos 1–2; Jer 46–51; Ezek 25–32; Hosea is perhaps the most notable exception). Because of the conspicuous frequency of the מִשָּׂא label in Isa 13–23, the departure from this label at 24:1 is striking. Instead of beginning the announcement of judgment with another מִשָּׂא-label, Isa 24 begins with the expression הִנֵּה + divine name + participle (*Look, YHWH is about to . . .*). Also unlike the preceding oracles, chs. 24–27 are not directed toward a specific nation, but rather the earth in general (with only a passing reference to Moab at 25:10–12).⁶ Therefore, although ch. 24 shares some imagery and themes with the oracles about the nations—especially chs. 13 and 14 concerning Babylon and its "king"—the above distinctions set it apart as the beginning of a unit which is distinct in some way from chs. 13–23.

The conclusion of the composition comes at the end of ch. 27, since 28:1 speaks again to a specified addressee, namely the "drunkards of Ephraim" (28:1) and the Jerusalem ruling class (28:14). The first word of ch. 28 is the prophetic term הוֹי (*woe*), which along with the following accusations against the people of Israel,

⁵ The noun מִשָּׂא occurs in Isa 13:1; 14:28; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1, 11, 13; 22:1; 23:1.

⁶ This lack of specific national identification, replaced by the more expansive terms תָּבֵל and אֶרֶץ, does not, however, imply that Isa 24–27 is wholly unlike the oracles against the nations. John Watts, in good company with other recent commentators, resists a radical disjunction as a separate "apocalypse": "It is misleading to give [chs. 24–27] a distinctively different genre—a position that would lead to the unnecessary fragmentation of the book" (*Isaiah 1–33*, rev. ed. WBC 24 [Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 2005], 368–9).

sounds much more like the situation of Isa 5–10 than that of Isa 24–27.⁷ Wildberger went so far as to say that ch. 28 opens a new section which "plainly has no connection with chaps. 24–27."⁸ However, a few scholars have noted ties between Isa 24–27 and what follows, including Willem Beuken, who is interested in reading ch. 28 *in light of* the preceding chapters,⁹ Hyun Chul Paul Kim, who similarly traces intertextual connections between these texts,¹⁰ and William Barker, who explores the possibility of a shared Ugaritic background of chs. 24–27 and ch. 28.¹¹ Nonetheless, 27:12–13 concludes the composition with the regathering motif, which reverses and thematically closes the "scattering" of 24:1.

At this juncture, it is sufficient to note that distinctions of genre (Isa 24–27 is neither a *massa* oracle nor a *woe* oracle) and content (universal scope) are strongly suggestive of Isa 24–27 as its own literary unit. In short, the structure and unity of chs. 24–27 remains a matter of dispute, but their status as a unit, distinct in some way from its surrounding literary context, does not.¹²

⁷ Nathan Mastnjak cites a number of parallels between Isa 28 and Isa 5–10, including Isa 28:13 (8:15), 28:16 (8:14), 28:22 (10:23) in his argument that the "covenant with death" (28:15, 18) refers to Assyria, not Egypt ("Judah's Covenant with Assyria in Isaiah 28," *VT* 64 [2014], 469). An additional thematic similarity between ch. 28 and the opening chapters of Isaiah includes the censure of drunkenness and its negative effects on social justice (28:1, 7 [5:11, 22–3]).

⁸ Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 446.

⁹ Willem Beuken, "Woe to Powers in Israel That Vie to Replace YHWH's Rule on Mount Zion! Isaiah Chapters 28–31 from the Perspective of Isaiah Chapters 24–27," in *Isaiah in Context: Studies in Honour of Arie van der Kooij on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Michaël N. van der Meer et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 25–43.

¹⁰ Kim, "City, Earth, and Empire," 40–44. After surveying the intertextual connections between chs. 24–27 and chs. 13–23/28–33, Kim concludes that "these intertextual correlations seem unique and notable enough to consider intentional editorial arrangement of Isa 13–33 in its present form" (43). He suggests a conceptual movement from increasing abstraction in chs. 13–23, to the cosmic focus of chs. 24–27, to the combination of both anonymity and concrete links to Israel and Judah in chs. 28–33.

¹¹ Barker, *Isaiah's Kingship Polemic*, 198–207.

¹² Watts and Goulder are among the small minority of critical scholars who do not consider chs. 24–27 a major unit in the macrostructure of the book. In his structural analysis, Watts includes ch. 23 (the Tyre oracle) in his discussion of chs. 24–27 and seeks to explain ch. 24 in its light (*Isaiah 1–33*, 350–52). On the other hand, Goulder includes all of Isa 21:1–30:7 in his rather idiosyncratic structural

Internal to chs. 24–27, there are various elements which exhibit *prima facie* continuity, such as poetic style, word-play, and highly stylised syntax. The announcement of judgment begins, for example, with paronomasia by pairing the alliterative verbs בוקק and בולק (in 24:1) and the rhyming verbs אכלה and נבלה (in 24:4). Similarly, a curse (אלה) eats (אכלה) the earth (24:6). Highly stylised language appears again in 25:6, with an extended chain of consonance and alliteration, to poetically describe YHWH's rich eschatological banquet:

משתה שמנים	a feast of rich foods,
משתה שמרים	a feast of aged wines,
שמנים ממחים	rich foods flavoured with marrow,
שמרים מזקקים	aged and refined wines.

Yet another example of alliterative style in the composition is the pair of rhetorical questions in 27:7 (the first: כהרג הרגיו הרג), whose author was, in the words of Hugh Williamson, "striving for alliterative effect even to the point of artificiality."¹³ Though these examples of stylised language are not in themselves measures of coherence, the striking concentration of rhyme, alliteration, and other word-play does lend a sense of stylistic unity to chs. 24–27.

unit, which is one of eight stages he identifies in the liturgical celebration of the cultic festival of Tabernacles (*Isaiah as Liturgy* [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004]). This proposal is based on his earlier findings from the Psalms of Korah. For him, Isa 24–27 are found in the unit which expresses the "myth of the Völkersturm" (i.e. a theological explanation of the nations' onslaught on Jerusalem). This structural proposal and consequent identification of chs. 24–27 within the the Völkersturm section is questionable for several reasons: 1) it downplays the text's *massā'* labels at 21:1, 11, 13; 22:1; and 23:1—all of which are continuous with chs. 13–20; 2) it does not appreciate that the theme of the nations' onslaught against Jerusalem is pervasive throughout the rest of the book, or at least chs. 1–39; 3) it fails to take into account the content shift that occurs at 28:1, including the introductory *hoy* ("The text shows not the least sign of any break at 28:1: there is no *massā'* heading, no new vision for the prophet, not even a new theme" [87]). Although most agree that there are meaningful textual relationships between chs. 24–27 and the surrounding chapters, these two structural proposals, which in different ways attempt an alternative macro-structure for this part of the book, do not ultimately satisfy as structural explanations.

¹³ H.G.M. Williamson, "Sound, Sense and Language in Isaiah 24–27," *JJS* 46.1 (1995), 8. Another possible wordplay is the ambiguous and disputed term שבלת in Isa 27:12. Roberts argues that the word is a double entendre intended to accentuate the metaphor of YHWH's grain harvest (J.J.M. Roberts, "Double Entendre in First Isaiah," *CBQ* 54 [1992], 40–41).

Other repeated lexical and thematic features which suggest that Isa 24–27 is a unit include the city-motif and Zion as the locus of divine rule. The enigmatic "city" (עיר or קריה) is mentioned in all four chapters (24:10, 12; 25:2 [x3], 3; 26:1, 5; 27:10). Similarly, the verbal root פקד is concentrated in these chapters (24:21, 22; 26:14, 16, 21; 27:1, 3; with only nine other occurrences in Isaiah). Thematically, YHWH's victory and reign on Mount Zion is focal (see 24:21; 25:6, 10; 27:13). And while there is a clear demarcation between prophecy and song in Isa 24–27, the hymnic sections reference elements from the prophetic oracles, so the divisions are not absolute. The speaker of the hymn of 25:1–5, for example, praises YHWH for making the city into a heap, echoing 24:10, where YHWH breaks down the city into chaos. Similarly, the singers of 26:1–6 recall 25:12 by praising YHWH for his humbling the lofty city. Such relationships suggest that the lyrical sections, as responses to the prophetic material, may be less arbitrary and more integrated within the discourse.

The composition is also characterised by the repetition of formal expressions. Though certainly not unique to these chapters, the temporal phrase ביום ההוא (*on that day*, and perhaps also the atypical term הבאים in 27:6), is found in each chapter. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the formal element of speech, especially liturgical language, sets these chapters apart from their larger literary context. The back-and-forth of prophetic material and spoken response distinguishes these chapters from their literary setting and helps draw the four chapters together. In addition to the prophetic word itself, each chapter has a reference(s) to a verbal response or the content of the speech itself (24:14–16b; 25:1–5, 9–10a; 26:1–19; 27:2–6). Perhaps the closest parallel in Isaiah is ch. 12, which like Isa 24–27,

contains hymns set in "that day" and closes a major section of the book (Isa 1–12).¹⁴ These features—highly stylised language, the destroyed city motif and other repeated words and phrases, and hymnic (and more generally, speech) language—are shared with other prophets and other parts of Isaiah. However, the concentration of such characteristics and their cumulative effect, combined with the text's distinction from its literary context and the sheer *givenness* of the text, justifies the attempt to read these chapters as a coherent composition.

3. Survey of Structural Criteria

By this point, it will not surprise the reader that a large number of structural proposals have been offered in the discussion of Isa 24–27. However, instead of simply listing names and verse numbers, I think it will be more helpful (and more interesting!) to consider the criteria used for structural analysis. In this way, we will take a step back from the details of this particular text and reflect on *how* different scholars arrive at their sometimes widely divergent structural conclusions. Neither an exhaustive catalogue nor an extended critique of any particular view is intended here, so the following will be primarily descriptive, rather than critical, in nature.

¹⁴ The lexical and stylistic similarities between the hymns of chs. 24–27 and ch. 12 are clear enough. Most consider ch. 12 a psalmic conclusion to the first main section of the book (chs. 1–12), since ch. 13 begins with a new superscription and introduces the oracles about the nations (chs. 13–23). E.g. Williamson argues that Deutero-Isaiah is responsible for the composition and placement of ch. 12 (*A Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1994], 123). However, there is no generally accepted explanation for the similarities between ch. 12 and the songs of chs. 24–27.

3.1. Genre

To begin, as with so many critical discussions of the book of Isaiah, Bernard Duhm established a basis on which later commentators built. He based his analysis of Isa 24–27 on formal differences, namely what he identified as "apokalyptischen Orakeln" (Isa 24:1–23; 25:6–8; 26:20–27:1; and 27:7–13 of uncertain origin) and "nicht-eschatologischen Liedern" (25:1–4; 25:9–11; 26:1–19; 27:2–5), which celebrate the fall of an enemy city.¹⁵ This Duhmian distinction between apocalyptic and lyric continues to influence interpretation of passage, illustrated in Blenkinsopp's decision to treat the three "Thanksgiving Psalms" (25:1–5, 9–12; 26:1–6), albeit not exactly the same songs as Duhm, together in his commentary.¹⁶ Another early explanation of the text's variety of forms was Lindblom's "cantata" hypothesis, which has been more often cited than adopted.¹⁷ His explanation of the composition posits a situation in which different singing groups celebrate the fall of the unnamed enemy city, identified as Babylon (after the 485 B.C.E. destruction by Xerxes). These structural proposals are different in detail but share a methodological approach which prioritises literary form.

3.2. Fortschreibung

A second, related, approach to structural analysis postulates an original core text which grew over time with a number of text accretions. Wildberger's proposal is

¹⁵ Duhm, *Jesaia*, 143ff.

¹⁶ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 360–64. He notes that "similarity in form and vocabulary suggests that these three brief compositions may be reciprocally illuminating" and points out that common to all three songs is the defeated enemy, described as a city (362).

¹⁷ Lindblom, *Jesaja-Apokalypse*, 68, 84. Perhaps the most serious weakness in the "cantata" proposal is the lack of socio-historical evidence that such choirs or liturgical performances existed in ancient Israel (cf. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 346; Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 29).

representative of this process of literary growth (also called *Wachstumsprozess*) which aims to describe the elements within the given text which reflect an extensive process of interpretation and revision over time. Such structural proposals tend to isolate the "city" sections of the text as well as the verses which appear to reflect later theological ideas (e.g. 25:8; 26:19). So Wildberger posits a groundwork of three units: 24:1–6; 24:14–20; and 26:7–21, with various eschatological and lyric additions.¹⁸ Although he considers the four chapter to be a distinct "document" within the book, he concludes that they cannot be considered a single literary unit, but rather a series of impressions of differing backgrounds that have been placed together and elaborated over time.¹⁹

3.3. Historical Background

Another way of organising the text is by its reconstructed historical setting(s). In his 1988 monograph which seeks to explain Isa 24–27 in an "integrated" fashion, Dan Johnson argues for a three-part text. His case is based largely on the criterion of proposed historical background for each of his sections. In particular, Johnson argues that the lamenting prophecy of 24:1–20 was written about Jerusalem just before its fall to Babylon in 586 (a "return to chaos"). The second and largest part of the text (24:21–27:1), Johnson argues, was written sometime during the Babylonian exile and looks forward to the defeat of Babylon and the concomitant restoration of Israel. In this reading, the final section (27:2–13) originates with the ascent of Cyrus or with

¹⁸ Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 440. Clements follows Wildberger's structure (*Isaiah 1–39*, 199–223).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 601.

the early post-exilic period (based in part on its similarities to Jer 31:1–8, 15–22 and Ezek 37:15–23).²⁰

3.4. Syntax and Poetics

Another method by which to structure the composition is discourse linguistic, without recourse to historical or diachronic matters. A representative of this approach to the structure of this text is the careful linguistic analysis of Hendrik Bosman, in "Syntactic Cohesion in Isaiah 24–27."²¹ His analysis traces the syntactical flow of the discourse, beginning with the smallest grammatical units, and working upwards to larger discourse units. He identifies the mainline, the backgrounded sections, as well as "interrupting" sections. Harm Van Grol, in the same volume, approaches the text as a poem, dividing it into cola, verse-lines, strophes, and stanzas, with similar results.²²

3.5. Theme

The final criterion by which literary structure can be based is theme. No one disputes the importance of thematic considerations, but some interpreters more strongly emphasise its import for discourse structure. William Millar represents this criterion for structure, which divides the text along broadly thematic lines.²³ Chapter 1 mentioned his identification of a thematic cycle of *threat*, *war*, *victory*, and *feast*—

²⁰ Johnson, *Chaos*, 92–93.

²¹ Bosman, "Syntactic Cohesion," 19–50.

²² Van Grol, "An Analysis of the Verse Structure of Isaiah 24–27," in *Studies in Isaiah 24–27*, 51–80.

²³ Miller, *Origin of Apocalyptic*. Millar's main divisions are Isa 24:1–16a; 24:16b–25:9; 25:10–26:8; 26:13–15; 26:16–27:6; and 27:12–13. Unfortunately for his argument, only two of these sections actually contain all four elements of the thematic progression (24:16b–25:9, and 26:16–27:6). See *Origin of Apocalyptic*, 70–71, for his summary chart.

themes which Millar identifies also in the Ugaritic Ba'al Cycle. It is by these themes that Millar establishes the structure of the text. Another thematic analysis, by Benedikt Otzen, results in a very different structure. This study traces thematic emphases of Zion versus "universalism" to structure Isa 24–27.²⁴ Against the typical dependence on formal categories for structure, Otzen proposes a structure based not on the bifurcation of prophecy and lyrics but on the themes of universal versus nationalistic tenor. Interestingly, the resulting structure diverges significantly from the genre-base approaches, since in Isa 24–27, the Zion theme cuts across genres.

Other macro-structural proposals trace a theological progression from judgment (24:1–20 [23]) to restoration (ch. 25ff). Marvin Sweeney presents a bi-fold structure for chs. 24–27, based along these broad thematic lines. His first part is 24:1–23, which he titles "Prophetic announcement of YHWH's punishment of the earth," and the second part is 25:1–27:13, entitled "Prophetic announcement of YHWH's blessing of the earth and its results for Zion/Israel." He claims that this overall structure is clear, "insofar as [the text] shifts its concern from YHWH's

²⁴ Otzen, "Traditions and Structures of Isaiah XXIV–XXVII," *VT* 24.2 (1974): 196–206. Otzen's divisions are as follows: Isa 24:1–12; 24:13–16aa; 24:16ab–20; 24:21–23; 25:1–5; 25:6–10a; 25:10b–12; 26:1–3; 26:4–6; 26:7–19; 26:20–27:1; 27:2–6; 26:7–11; 27:12–13. He argues that the "universal" sections originate from the pre-exilic and exilic periods, whereas the strongly nationalistic passages (expressed using the name Zion) are post-exilic. Given this hypothesis, he concludes this about the compositional history of the text: "a group of older eschatological passages were interpolated with passages about Zion as the navel of the earth, to which not only the dispersed Israelites but also the heathen peoples shall crowd at the end of days" (204).

Otzen's study rightly observes a tension in the text between nationalistic and universal tenors, though one wonders if such a rigid division between (pre)exilic universalism and post-exilic nationalism is justified, either on historical or literary terms. Even within Isa 24–27, the proposal results in unnatural literary divisions such as the one at 26:4, typically recognised as the centre of a more or less unified song. Otzen is also compelled to bracket out 26:7–19 as an "interpolation of a mixed character," since it does not fit his reading scheme (203). More positively, an important observation of this study is that the often drawn distinction between world-judgment sections and city-judgment sections is hasty ("There is . . . no contrast whatsoever between these two groups, and the separation of them is absolutely artificial" [203–04]). He points out the thematic interweaving in the text, citing 24:1–6 (world destruction) which gradually merges into a description of the destroyed city, but shifts back to worldwide focus again in v. 13.

punishment of the earth and its implications to YHWH's blessing of the earth and its implications for both the nations and Israel."²⁵ Donald Polaski finds a similar two-part structure, using the labels "destruction" and "construction."²⁶ Though Sweeney and Polaski rightly note the dichotomous extremes of divine punishment and restoration which make the text so striking, the two-part analysis over-simplifies the structure. Indeed, one might perhaps wish the text unfolded more simply: from punishment to blessing. Yet the text itself is more nuanced, with several "judgment" units falling in Sweeney's "blessing" part, e.g. Moab's defeat (Isa 25:11–12), lament (26:11ff.), and the abandoned city of 27:10.

The conversation and debate surrounding the structure of Isa 24–27 is by no means unique in the study of prophetic literature. In some ways, the structure and "unity" of these chapters illustrates the larger discussion of critical method which cannot be addressed further here. However, a couple of summarising comments will suffice to establish the need for a fresh analysis.

1) The basis for structural decisions depends in large part on the interpretive context and goals of the reader. If one is familiar with the Baal myth or other ancient Near Eastern motifs, then one hears thematic resonances in Isa 24–27 that may be determinative for structure. If one is interested in the literary growth over time, then that theory of redaction is brought to bear on the structure. If one is looking for some sort of overall intent in the book's presentation and organisation, then the structure

²⁵ Marvin Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39 with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 312.

²⁶ Polaski, "Destruction, Construction, Argumentation," 22. Polaski finds the early post-exilic setting to be most likely and makes the case that the text's main purpose is to inspire the re-establishment of temple worship. While I agree with Polaski's observation of the centrality of Jerusalem for Isa 24–27, I find this argument about restoring the temple cult to be more speculative. For example, he suggests that the phrase "lay hold of my refuge" (27:5) alludes to grasping the horns of the altar, but gives little evidence for this claim.

will reflect this (e.g. overall theological progression from judgment to redemption). This is not to say that all structural proposals are equally helpful, or hopelessly subjective, but simply that structural proposals tend to reflect the interpretive interests and aims of their originators.

2) The aims of prophetic criticism have shifted and diversified since the earliest critical explanation of the structure of Isa 24–27. It is reasonable, given the aims of this project within the wider scope of prophetic studies, to ask how the more recent interest in identifying and appreciating the emergent meaning of the prophetic book may affect our attempt to discern the structure the text. The proposed structure will differ in some ways from some of the proposals surveyed above in that it purposefully groups units of differing genres (e.g. prophecy and hymn) into the same "movement" for the purpose of exploring literary cohesion *across* genre boundaries.

4. Structural Analysis

Isaiah 24–27 is characterised by a mix of genres: not only prophetic material and lyrical praise, but also prayer, lament, and dialogical explanation. Allowing for *only* "lyric" and "prophecy" leaves much of chs. 26 and 27 unexplained, hardly an ideal solution given that these chapters make up about half of the composition. However, if the "lyric" category is broadened to "response," then this broader category includes the entirety of the text. The composition consequently appears as a series of prophetic announcements (set "in that day" and focused on Mt. Zion) followed by various responses to these announcements, including but not limited to songs.

In light of this possibility, Isa 24–27 can, at the broadest level, be read as three overarching movements, each consisting of a prophetic announcement and one or two responses: Movement 1 (24:1–25:5), Movement 2 (25:6–26:21), and Movement 3 (27:1–13). The prophetic announcement sections exhibit significant continuity, as each describes a visual representation of the events or qualities of "that day."²⁷ On the other hand, the responses to these announcements vary considerably, whether in speaker, time, tone, or purpose. The structural proposal below will focus on the structure only, leaving the more complicated task of cohesive relations and meaning to the next chapter. Form and meaning are separable only in theory, especially for poetry, but the separation is practically necessary.

4.1. Movement 1

Movement 1 (24:1–25:5) announces YHWH's coming cosmic judgment and uncontested rule and praises YHWH on this basis. It consists of an opening prophetic announcement of judgment against the whole world, including natural and human life, which culminates in the glorious reign of YHWH on Mt. Zion (24:1–23). The response which immediately follows is a hymn of praise, which extols YHWH for carrying out his plan to overthrow the enemy city and protect the vulnerable (25:1–5). Within this movement, the main division is along genre lines (judgment oracle and hymn of praise). As will become clear, these two sections are related, but the genre shift at 25:1 nonetheless justifies a significant structural division.

²⁷ This *prima facie* continuity across the oracular sections has led some commentators to posit an earlier prophetic text, sans lyrics. E.g. 25:6–8 originally immediately followed 24:21–23.

The prophetic announcement itself is made up of two units of unequal length, an initial judgment oracle against the earth (vv. 1–20) and an "in that day" oracle against the entire cosmos announcing YHWH's rule (vv. 21–23). The section structure includes an introductory subunit (vv. 1–3) that sets the tone for what follows, elaboration (vv. 4–12), as well as a summary (v. 13), restatement (vv. 19–20), and climax (vv. 21–23). Though the precise time frame is unspecified, this announcement uses "projecting language" about the future.²⁸ The judgment announcement continues with an elaborative description of a ruined earth, which contains a statement of the basis for judgment (vv. 4–13). One suggestive detail that the section should be read as a single announcement is the syntagmatic and stylistic repetition throughout verses 1–20:

			ובולקה	הארץ	בוקק	(v. 1
	תבוז	והבוז	הארץ	תבוק	הבוק	(v. 3
תבל	נבלה	אמללה	הארץ	נבלה	אבלה	(v. 4
ארץ	התפוררה	פור	הארץ	התרעעה	רעה	(v. 19a–b
			ארץ	התמוטטה	מוט	(v. 19c
		[כשכור]	ארץ	תנוע	נוע	(v. 20a

Though the verbal aspect shifts from participle, *w^eqatal*, and *yiqtol* forms (vv. 1–3) to *qatal* forms (vv. 4ff.),²⁹ these verses should be read as a continuation of the announcement in 24:1–3 and not as a separate oracle. This announcement section itself contains an abrupt interruption at v. 14 by an unnamed "they" (המה). Their

²⁸ Marvin Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–4 and the Post-Exilic Understanding of the Isaianic Tradition* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 52.

²⁹ Bosman "Syntactic Cohesion," 32, considers this "descriptive background" to the imperfective verbs.

apparent optimism is quickly countered, however, by a reprisal of the judgment announcement (v. 16b–20).

The second, much briefer, unit of the judgment announcement is introduced with the temporal phrase **ביום ההוא**, the first of seven such phrases in chs. 24–27.³⁰ Though both units (24:1–20 and 24:21–23) are part of the prophetic announcement of judgment, the latter unit is set off by the phrase "in that day," by the mention of both earthly *and* heavenly powers, and by the use of distinctive vocabulary. This brief scene also does not exhibit the same distinctive alliterative style of vv. 1–20, though it does share the theme of YHWH's humbling the lofty (**מרום**). The scene depicts YHWH as punisher of the highest rulers of both heaven and earth, reigning with such brilliance that the sun and moon are "ashamed" (24:23).

It is on this victorious note that a first-person speaker, without introduction or transition, turns to praise. The singer begins with direct address to YHWH and consistently references YHWH in the second person. Not only does the genre shift, but the change of tone is stark—from the disaster of a devastated cosmos to exuberant praise. This hymn shares many features with psalmic literature, including first person direct address to God (*YHWH, you are my God*, v. 1), characteristic psalmic terminology (**פלא** [*marvellous thing*], v. 1), and expressions (**היית מעוז לדל** [*you are a refuge for the poor*] v. 4). The primary connection between this psalm and the announcement of judgment is YHWH's destruction of the enemy city—this is the

³⁰ If one includes the elliptical term **הבאים** (*the coming [days ?]*, Isa 27:6), this becomes eight. Van Wieringen distinguishes these "elaboration formulas" further by separating the full form in first position **והיה ביום ההוא** (Isa 24:21; 27:12, 13), the form without the verb **ביום ההוא** (Isa 26:1; 27:1, 2), and finally the verbless form in second position (25:9), which cannot be given the same weight as a caesura as the first position formulae ("Isaiah 24:21–25:12: A Communicative Analysis" in *Formation*, 77–78).

content of the prophetic announcement (*The city is broken down into chaos*, 24:10) and the basis for the hymnist's praise (*You have turned the city into a heap*, 25:2). Therefore, the hymn functions as a direct response to the announced judgment and should therefore be considered part of Movement 1.³¹

4.2. Movement 2

Movement 2 (25:6–26:21) begins with another prophetic announcement, also describing YHWH's actions on Mt. Zion, namely his trans-national banquet and defeat of Moab (25:6–12). In this movement, the response is two-fold: first, a hymn of praise (26:1–6) and, second, a prayer of trust (26:7–21). These divisions are again supported in large part by shifts in genre. The genre shift marks a disjunction at 25:6, from the initial song of praise (spoken to YHWH in second person) to prophetic speech (spoken about YHWH in third person); and again at 26:1 by the shift from prophetic speech back to song, this time with a prose introduction: "In that day, this song will be sung in the land of Judah."

The prophetic announcement in Movement 2 falls into two units: YHWH's banquet, and the destruction of Moab. The verbal form *w^eqatal* continues the "main line of discourse" from 24:23.³² This syntagmatic evidence for continuity with 24:23

³¹ Two others prayers of thanksgiving serve to illustrate a similar lack of direct quotation of their narrative setting, while still exhibiting thematic continuity: Jonah's prayer (Jon 2:2–10) and Hezekiah's prayer (Isa 38:10–20). The prayer of Jonah never mentions being inside a fish, but instead—using poetic language—the "belly of Sheol" (Jon 2:2). He is underneath "waves and billows," at the very "roots of the mountains." The prayer also speaks, though, of YHWH's holy temple, idolatry, and sacrifice, which seem more germane to a participant in the temple cult than to the situation of Jonah. Similarly, Hezekiah's prayer does not speak in plain terms of a physical illness but instead of deliverance "from the pit of destruction." He also speaks of YHWH casting his sins away (Isa 38:17). The songs in Isa 24–27 are comparable in that they respond to the theme of their (prophetic) context while also possessing their own psalmic integrity.

³² This terminology is from Bosman, "Syntactical Cohesion," 38.

is corroborated by the lexical link בהר הזה (*on that mountain*, Isa 25:6), which refers back to the locative designation הר ציון (*Mt. Zion*, Isa 24:23). Thus the referent of the phrase בהר הזה, where YHWH holds his feast and "swallows up death," is Mt. Zion, the locus of YHWH's reign. Embedded within this prophetic oracle is another response from the people (25:9–10a) of what will be spoken *on that day*. The following mention of Moab is unsettling, and considered by many to be misplaced in this otherwise highly positive and inclusive passage.³³ It is, however, syntactically integrated into its context:³⁴

v. 6	ועשה יהוה צבאות ... משתה	And YHWH of hosts will make (<i>w^eqatal</i>) ... a banquet
v. 7	ובלע	And he will swallow up (<i>w^eqatal</i>)
v. 9	ואמר ביום ההוא	And it will be said (<i>w^eqatal</i>) on that day
v. 10b	ונדוש מואב תחתיו	And Moab will be trampled (<i>w^eqatal</i>) in his place.

The responsive hymn of 26:1–6 is placed in the mouths of the future victorious Judahite community, spoken "in that day." Just as the song of Movement 1 echoes the prophetic announcement which precedes it, so too the song of Movement 2 echoes the prophetic announcement which precedes it. However, unlike the hymn of 25:1–5, a general genre label and location are given to the reader: a song (שיר), sung in the land of Judah. The song of praise picks up on the themes of the prophetic oracle which proceeds it. The song recalls the bringing down (השח) of the walls of Moab in the immediate context, using the only two *hip'il* forms of this verb in the Hebrew Bible. It echoes the form of the preceding Moab oracle:

³³ Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 210.

³⁴ Thus if this Moab statement comes from a later time of particular animosity toward Moab, this needs to be established on other grounds than syntactical irregularity. For example, the second person suffix of v. 12 (הומתך, *your walls*), in an otherwise third person context, could suggest a reworking of a previous oracle.

עד עפר	לארץ	הגיע	השפיל	השח	Announcement (25:12b)
יגיענה	עד ארץ	ישפילה	ישפילנה	השח . . .	Response (26:5b)

Lastly, this song shares words and themes with the hymn of 25:1–5 such as "waiting" on YHWH (קוה, Isa 25:9 and 26:8) and reversal of fortunes for the "poor and needy" (25:4; 26:6).

Movement 2 has a second response, namely a responsive prayer (26:7–19) also spoken by the community, but the setting seems to be quite different. This communal prayer-lament breaks the pattern of prophetic announcement + hymn of praise and appears to be spoken not by a triumphant worshiper, but by an embattled but faithful community. Sweeney interprets the prayer of 26:7–21 as a sort of flashback, "a description of the circumstances that led up to this victory [of verses 1–6]."³⁵ The constituent units within this section are less distinct than in the other two movements, since the entire section (with the exception of the final two verses) is a single community prayer. Yet one can nonetheless trace units within the prayer: a wisdom unit (vv. 7–10), followed by a lament (vv. 11–19). Despite this major difference from the hymn of 26:1–6, there is some degree of continuity between the two responses, as there is no explicit structural disjunction, and they are both spoken in the voice of "we" (marked by the predominance of first person plural forms) and directed toward YHWH (who is addressed in the second person or whose name appears in the vocative).

This second movement concludes with a prophetic exhortation to hide from the imminent judgment of YHWH (26:21), a warning which resumes the text's opening

³⁵ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–4*, 53.

statement, both in form and content, and doubles as a conclusion to the prayer and transition to the composition's final movement. Notice the repeated formula, הנה + YHWH + participle, followed by the announcement of judgment:

הנה יהוה בוקק הארץ ובולקה	Look, <i>YHWH is about to</i> empty the earth and destroy it. (24:1)
כי הנה יהוה יצא ממקומו לפקד עון יושב הארץ עליו	Yes <i>look, YHWH is about to</i> come out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their sin. (26:21)

4.3. Movement 3

Finally, Movement 3 (27:1–13) consists of two further "in that day" announcements (vv. 1, 2–6), a response of what I have called a dialogic section (vv. 7–11), and two final "in that day" statements (vv. 12, 13). The formula "in that day" announces YHWH's decisive defeat of Leviathan (27:1) and the restoration of his vineyard (27:2–6).³⁶ The final response of the text is not hymn, meditation, or lament, but instead a particularly difficult section which wrestles with the idea of divine violence and the community's plight in terms of YHWH's plans for atonement. Unlike the prophetic announcements that surround it, this section is not introduced by "in that day," but instead by a pair of stylised highly rhetorical questions (27:7). An implication of these questions, as I will later argue, is the claim that the community's suffering is the result of YHWH's withholding of "compassion" for the purpose of teaching them righteousness and atoning for their sin. Though the visible situation between "slain Leviathan" and "slain Israel" may appear indistinguishable in lived experience, the prophetic rhetoric attempts to portray an invisible theological reality, namely that

³⁶ Some take v. 6 to be an addition to the vineyard song, perhaps because of the additional temporal modifier הבאים, but regardless the comment is well-integrated, continuing the agricultural metaphor of the song, and should be read as its conclusion.

God has a unique purpose for his harshness toward Israel. The closing words of this final movement, and the text as a whole, are two paired oracles beginning with יהיה + "in that day" + *yiqtol*. The bi-fold announcement of repatriation specifies that יהוה will gather his scattered people to Mt. Zion for worship. This return theme concludes Isa 24–27, similar to its concluding role in two other major sections of the book of Isaiah: Isa 11:12–16 (chs. 1–11); 27:12–13 (chs. 13–27); and 35:1–10 (chs. 28–35). And it also reverses the scattering judgment that opened the composition (24:1).

5. Conclusion

To summarise briefly, I have argued that the distinctive alternation between prophetic oracles and responses which they elicit is a fruitful way to structure Isa 24–27. Though these chapters are comprised of various forms, this structural analysis has suggested several elements of continuity that have a unifying role. I have sought to show that the constituent sections of Isa 24–27 are integrated into a literary composition with an identifiable three-movement structure. The following analysis of literary cohesion will take each movement of the text in turn.

PART II

TEXT ANALYSIS

Καὶ ἐξαλείψει πᾶν δάκρυον ἐκ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν, καὶ ὁ θάνατος οὐκ ἔσται
ἔτι οὔτε πένθος οὔτε κραυγὴ οὔτε πόνος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι.

—John of Patmos

CHAPTER 4

MOVEMENT 1 (ISAIAH 24:1–25:5)

1. Introduction

This chapter will address Isa 24:1–25:5, the first movement of Isa 24–27. It will consider especially the cohesive ties between the hymn of 25:1–5 and the prophetic announcement which precedes it (24:1–23). As outlined in Chapter 2, the analysis will first identify and evaluate cohesion within smaller units before considering the movement as a whole.

2. Structure and Genre

At a basic structural level, the literary framework of Movement 1 consists of an extended announcement of divine judgment (24:1–23) followed by a hymnic response of praise (25:1–5):

Movement 1—Isa 24:1–25:5

Section 1—YHWH's Rule on Mt. Zion (24:1–23)	Announcement
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Unit 1 (24:1–20)

Subunit (vv. 1–3)

Subunit (vv. 4–13)

Subunit (vv. 14–20)

Unit 2 (24:21–23)

Section 2—Hymn of Praise (25:1–5)	Response
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Section 1 can be further divided into two uneven units (24:1–20 and 24:21–23), and the discourse divisions at both 24:1 and 24:21 are, for the most part, undisputed. As discussed in Chapter 3, the discourse caesura before 24:1 is signalled in several ways, including a departure from the preceding literary designation *מִשָּׁע* (*oracle*,

burden).¹ Instead, ch. 24 opens with a different prophetic formula, הנה + the divine name + participle (*Look, YHWH is about to . . .*).² Discourse boundary markers may also correspond with a shift in genre, a common function of initiatory markers (e.g. "Once upon a time" marks the beginning of a fairy tale, or the formulaic expression אדם אשרי [*blessed is the man . . .*] marks the beginning of a proverbial blessing).³ The discourse disjunction at 24:1 is also indicated by a shift in thematic focus from particular nations to the entire earth (תבל and הארץ). Instead of addressing particular geopolitical entities—e.g. Babylon (13:1), Assyria (14:25), Moab (15:1), or Tyre (23:1)—ch. 24 pronounces a sweeping judgment on the entire world without reference to a particular nation. Together the shift in literary designation and widened thematic scope indicate a new section of the book.⁴

The break at 25:1 is clear, since it begins a new lyrical section which asyndetically follows the prophetic judgment announcement of 24:1–23. There is little disagreement about the general genre label of 25:1–5, given its many psalmic features: "song of thanksgiving."⁵ Within the first section there is less agreement,

¹ Isa 13:1; 14:28; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1, 11, 13; 22:1; 23:1. The term משה is used elsewhere in the prophetic literature, though not with the number or frequency of Isa 13–23; e.g. Nah 1:1; Hab 1:1; Ezek 12:10; and Mal 1:1.

² This construction does not always signify a new major section, since it occurs again (resumptively) in 26:21. Interestingly, the construction occurs several times in Isa 1–39 (cf. 3:1; 10:33; 13:9; 19:1; 22:17; 30:27), but is absent from chs. 40–66. The latter half of the book uses a similar construction: הנה + first cs suffix [הנני] + participle. This slightly altered form introduces the first person speech of YHWH (e.g. Isa 43:19 [*Behold, I am doing a new thing*]; 65:17, 18; 66:12; cf. Isa 54:11), a distinctive element in the latter half of the book. This minor change in idiom signals a striking semantic contrast: in the first construction of chs. 1–39 (including 24:1), an announcement of judgment, and in the second construction of chs. 40ff., divine words of reassurance.

³ E.g. Prov 3:13; Ps 1:1. See Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (London: SPCK, 1989), 241.

⁴ 1QISa^a begins a new paragraph at 24:1, suggesting that this structural division was recognised at an early stage in the transmission of the text (Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 37). Codexes Aleppo and Leningradensis also have a major break (*petucha*) at 24:1; see Jenner, "Petucha and Setuma," 81–117.

⁵ Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 94; "thanksgiving song" (Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 360); Lohmann is a bit more specific, "religiöses Siegeslied" (religious siege song) ("Die selbständigen lyrischen Abschnitte in Jes 24–27," *ZAW* 37 [1917], 16). There is, however, some disagreement regarding the

however. This is due partly to uncertainty about the significance of the temporal formula *ביום ההוא* (*on that day*) in 24:21.⁶ The merismatic v. 21 extends the scope of judgment even further—from the earth to the entire cosmos (both *האדמה* and *המרום*). The structure of vv. 1–20 forms an inclusio, repeating both syntagmatic structure and semantic content (cf. Chapter 3), and concludes with the summarising statement (*it [the earth] falls and will not rise again*). Despite the above relatively clear-cut textual divisions at 24:1 and 24:21, the units *within* vv. 1–20 are more widely disputed, often reflecting divergent interpretive methods.⁷

At this point we must qualify the use of structure terms like "division" and "caesura." As used here, these terms refer to synchronic literary disjunction without reference to diachrony. Because the present aim is to read Isa 24–27 as a coherent whole, which contains both continuity and discontinuity, it is important to recognise structural boundaries, but not to treat them as absolute.⁸

song's relation to the community: "communal thanksgiving song" (Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 335), "individual psalm" (Hays and Irvine, *Eighth-Century Prophet*, 304). The language suggests an individual speaker, given the first person singular voice and the use of the verb *ידה*, since this verb is expected for individual songs, in contrast to *הלל* (*pi.*), which more often expresses collective praise of the community. Cf. Westermann, "The distinctive of this stem [*ידה* hiph.] is that an *individual* chooses to praise as a result of his/her own decision" (*TLOT* 2:504, emphasis added). The possibility of a representative individual notwithstanding, the song is, therefore, that of an individual.

⁶ The first of seven occurrences in Isa 24–27: Isa 24:21; 25:9; 26:1; 27:1, 2, [6], 12, 13.

⁷ Polaski rightly observes that "Isa 24:1–20 has been divided up in a bewildering variety of ways" (*Authorizing an End*, 79).

⁸ Similarly, Polaski observes that "simply because the text may be separated into these smaller passages does not mean . . . that the resulting pericopes are independent of one another. Many historical critics assume this, and so they seek to discern the historical occasion which gave rise to each independent section of the text. I assume that whatever the origin of the various pieces, they began at some point to function together in the form of the text presently known to us" (*Authorizing an End*, 146–7).

3. Section 1 (24:1–23)—YHWH Takes Up His Rule

3.1. Unit 1 (24:1–20)

For the purposes of analysis, we will consider this unit in three subunits: introduction (vv. 1–3), elaboration (vv. 4–13), and clarification (vv. 14–20).⁹

Introduction (24:1–3)

הנה יהוה בוקק הארץ ובולקה ועוה פניה והפיץ ישביה והיה כעם ככהן כעבד כאדניו כשפחה כגברתה ¹⁰ כקונה כמוכר כמלוה כלוה כנשה כאשר נשא בו הבוק תבוק הארץ והבוז תבוז כי יהוה דבר את הדבר הזה	¹ Look, YHWH is about to empty the earth and destroy it, and he will twist its surface and scatter its inhabitants. ² And the people will be like the priest, the servant like his master, the maid servant like her mistress, the buyer like the seller, the lender like the borrower, the creditor like the one who takes the loan from him. ³ The earth will be utterly emptied and completely plundered, for YHWH has spoken this word.
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This prophetic oracle announces a coming destruction of the earth (הארץ) and its inhabitants at the hand of YHWH, with devastating results that reach across the entire social stratum. The subunit opens with the prophetic announcement formula mentioned above and closes with a divine speech formula (כי יהוה דבר את הדבר הזה) in v. 3. A few commentators prefer to place v. 3 with the following text, based on its

⁹ Amongst the many structure proposals, this unit delimitation is well-attested. E.g. Katherine Hays, *The Earth Mourns: Prophetic Metaphor and Oral Aesthetic*, SBL Academia Biblica 8 (Atlanta: SBL, 2002), 134–36.

¹⁰ The Masoretic vocalisation of this form (בְּגִבְרֶתָהּ) is a grammatical oddity, since a noun cannot take both a pronominal suffix and the definite article. This can be explained, however, as intentional for the sake of alliteration or assonance (Williamson, "Sound, Sense, and Language," 2; Gray, *Commentary*, 410; cf. Joüon and Muraoka, *Grammar*, §140c; *GKC*, §127i). The spelling may also be influenced by a peculiarity of Rabbinic Hebrew in which the clitic prepositions –כּ, –בּ and –לּ tend to be vocalised with the vowel of the definite article (*pataḥ*) regardless of definiteness (see Aaron Rubin, "Definite Article: Pre-Modern Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, ed. Geoffrey Khan).

shift in verbal forms from masc. participle and *w^eqatal* forms (vv. 1–2) to inf. ab. + *yiqtol* constructions (v. 3), as well as its shift in grammatical subject and the lack of a connecting *wāw* (v. 3).¹¹ However, these details are not as helpful as they may appear at first, since the verb tense shifts again in v. 4 to *qatal* forms. Verse 4 is similarly asyndetic, and the characteristic sparseness of discourse connectors like *wāw* in poetic language calls for caution when using them to identify structure. Divine speech formulas can both introduce (e.g. Isa 22:25; 25:8) and conclude units (e.g. Isa 1:20; 21:17), but the concluding function is more common in Isaiah, including the occurrence at 25:8. It is better to include v. 3, which results in an inclusio of the verbal root בקק (vv. 1, 3), and frames YHWH as both announcer (v. 3) and agent (v. 1) of the coming devastation.¹²

The introductory subunit is united by its consistent imperfective aspect. It begins with an emphatic הנה particle and portrays YHWH bursting onto the world stage as the active subject of the four opening verbs. These verbal actions are expressed as two participles followed by two *w^eqatal* forms (all joined by *wāw*-consecutive), which take on the future orientation of the initial participle: "Look, YHWH *is about to* empty (בוקק) the earth and destroy it (ובולקה), and he *will* twist (ועוה) its surface and scatter (והפיץ) its inhabitants." This syntactical chain continues through v. 2, which also opens with a *w^eqatal* form (והיה).¹³ The *w^eqatal* chain is broken at v. 3, but the verse nonetheless continues the subunit's imperfective aspect with two emphatic inf. abs. + *yiqtol* constructions. The verb forms in this introductory subunit, though

¹¹ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 327. Similarly, Wildberger takes the divine speech formula (v. 3c) as the introduction to vv. 4ff (*Isaiah 13–27*, 897).

¹² Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 350.

¹³ The prophetic use of והיה is well-attested as an introduction to future action, and may be compared to the narrational ויהי (cf. *GKC* §112 y).

including several different "tense" forms, all share a future orientation in their prophetic depiction of a devastating and sweeping catastrophe to come.¹⁴

A second collection of cohesive ties within vv. 1–3 is the role played by the noun *הָאָרֶץ* and its pronouns. *The earth* (*הָאָרֶץ*) is the object of the first verbal action (v. 1), the antecedent of the three 3 fem. sg. pronominal suffixes (v. 1), and the subject of the passive verbs (v. 3). Each of these references to the earth constitutes a referential tie to the initial occurrence of the word *הָאָרֶץ*, six times in only three verses: (v. 1) Look, YHWH is about to empty *the earth* and destroy *it*, and he will twist *its* surface and scatter *its* inhabitants . . . (v. 3) *The earth* will be utterly emptied, and [*it*] will be completely plundered.¹⁵ Each of these suffixes refers back to the definite noun *הָאָרֶץ*, creating a cohesive effect which, as will become clear below, continues throughout the whole composition.

This "earth" reference chain also demonstrates the propensity for referential cohesion to move from more to less specification. Linguists explain this tendency as an aid to the interpretive process by signalling the degree of "accessibility" of the word's antecedent and by increasing language economy.¹⁶ This articular noun *הָאָרֶץ* (lower accessibility), followed by a chain of 3 fem. sg. pronouns (higher

¹⁴ Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 474.

¹⁵ The ellipsis of the subject *הָאָרֶץ* in 24:3b constitutes what Wilfred Watson calls a "pivot pattern," in which a single term pivots to function in both lines of a poetic couplet. This pattern often comes at the beginning or end of a poem or section to "demarcate poetic units" (*Classical Biblical Poetry*, 219). The "pivot pattern" in v. 3a–b corresponds to this usage and signals the end of the first subunit of the poem.

¹⁶ Sanders and Spooren discuss the theory that measures "high accessibility markers" (require less linguistic material) and "low accessibility markers" (require more linguistic material). The high accessibility markers tend to signal continued activation of a topic, whereas low accessibility markers tend to mark the termination of activation and introduction of a new topic ("Discourse and Text Structure," 920). Beaugrande and Dressler describe a similar phenomenon, namely that the default progression of topic specificity begins high and moves towards lower specificity, e.g. proper name→ specific description→ general class→ pro-form (*Introduction to Text Linguistics*, 64).

accessibility), follows this general discourse trend. The noun הארץ is repeated in v. 3, likely because of lowered accessibility due to a change of grammatical subject.

One verse in the introduction (v. 2) does not mention the earth directly, but does tie back to it through a different type of cohesion, namely lexical cohesion. Its social demographic list is connected to the word יושביה (*its* [3 fem. sg.] *inhabitants*, v. 1) as several hyponyms of the term. In other words, each listed item is a specific example of an *earth-dweller* (יושביה). The opposing demographic pairs are themselves joined by the repeated comparative particle –כ. One pair relates to the cult (*laity* and *priest*), two pairs relate to the domestic sphere (*servant* and *his master*, *maidservant* and *her mistress*), and three pairs relate to the business sector (*buyer* and *seller*, *lender* and *borrower*, *creditor* and *the "one who takes the loan from him"*).¹⁷ Besides filling out the picture of widespread devastation, this erasure of class distinctions is a well-known motif in ancient curses and descriptions of catastrophe.¹⁸

The last item in the list of demographic pairs breaks the pattern of the other items: instead of the preposition –כ prefixed to both nouns in the pair (e.g. כעם ככהן, v. 2a), the final item in the list is slightly longer and is introduced with the particle כאשר. Although this final element is a grammatical outlier,¹⁹ it exhibits a feature sometimes seen in lists, namely a slight difference in the final item to signal the final

¹⁷ Doyle, *Metaphorically Speaking*, 155. The accent pattern yields a regular 3+2+2, 2+2+3 pattern (Harm W.M. van Grol, "Verse Structure of Isaiah 24–27," 55, 57). I prefer to simply follow the semantic grouping of the pattern 1+2+3: the first pair distinctly cultic, the second domestic, the third commercial/economic.

¹⁸ Paul Kruger, "A World Turned on its Head in Ancient Near Eastern Prophetic Literature: A Powerful Strategy to Depict Chaotic Scenarios," *VT* 62 (2012), 65. In fact, "the principle of inversion often functions as a key motif in the repertoire in some ancient Near Eastern 'prophetic' scenarios of chaos: the world of chaos is portrayed as the direct reverse of the ideal world" (75). Cf. Jer 14:3–4, which includes both nobles and farmhands; Isa 3:1–7 also features the trope of social reversal.

¹⁹ Pace Watson, who finds a less intentional reason for this deviation from the pattern, namely that "the poet was unable to find a one-word antonym for 'creditor,' which accounts for the clumsy last line" ("Internal Parallelism in Classical Hebrew Verse," *Bib* 66 [1985], 376).

constituent.²⁰ Though by no means an exhaustive catalogue of demographic groups in the ancient world, the list nonetheless expresses totality and impartiality vis-à-vis divine judgment.²¹ In addition to the repeated use of the noun אֲרֶץ and its pronouns, these hyponyms of earth-dwellers emphasise the sweeping scope of the envisioned judgment.

A third collection of cohesive ties in the introductory subunit is the semantic domain of destruction, especially related to warfare. This collocational cohesion occurs through the repetition of associated, though not synonymous, verbal roots: בָּקַק (*to empty*), בָּלַק (*to destroy*), עִוָּה (*to twist*), פִּוֵּץ (*to scatter*), and two emphatic infinitive absolute constructions with the verbal roots בָּקַק and בָּזַז (*to plunder*).²² Within the Hebrew Bible, verbs from the root בָּקַק only occur in prophetic literature, unsurprisingly always in the context of judgment.²³ Although vv. 1–3 do not specify precisely what form the destruction will take, they use the terminology of military

²⁰ This phenomenon is analogous to the English convention which includes the conjunction "and" before the final word in a list, with or without the Oxford comma (e.g. prophet, priest, and sage). Another Hebrew example can be found in the list in Isa 3:24, which contains five pairs of objects in the form "there will be instead of [תחת] good thing x, bad thing y." The positive item is listed first in each of the pairs until the final pair, which reverses the order, "[there will be] bad thing x, instead of good thing y." This stylistic variation in the last pair does not affect the semantics of the phrase but does signal closure. See also Hos 2:13; 4:1.

²¹ The first pair of the list appears to be an allusion to Hos 4:9. Some infer from the omission of מֶלֶךְ that the list derives from a post-monarchical context. Kaiser finds in the contrast an indication that the society was led by a priestly aristocracy (*Isaiah 13–39*, trans. R.A. Wilson, OTL [London: SCM, 1974], 182). This is a plausible but speculative hypothesis, and it fails to account for the use of the same expression in Hosea.

²² The cohesion produced by syntactical parallel is strengthened here by wordplay, in this case, rhyme and assonance (MT vocalisation). It appears that this wordplay is intentional, given that (like the nouns of 24:2) it requires an unusual vocalisation of each verb. Where one would expect the vocalisation תִּבְּקַק תִּבְּלַק, the MT reads תִּבְּזַק תִּבְּזַל. This can be explained as an alternative spelling for the infinitive absolute, to which the spelling of the imperfect is attracted. Another possible explanation is that the geminate verbs were vocalised following the pattern of hollow verbs. Regardless, the MT spellings are oriented toward producing assonance/rhyme (see Williamson, "Sound, Sense and Language," 2).

²³ The only exception is Hos 10:1, which is normally understood to be a different, homographic root; HALOT: "to be luxuriant." The derived nominal forms are בִּזְזָה (*waste; empty*) and מִבְּזָה (*devastation*). Some have suggested that, more specifically than simply destroy, the root has the sense of emptying, here emptying the world of its inhabitants (cf. A. H. Konkel, *NIDOTTE* 1: 705).

invasion, especially בזז (*to plunder*). A similar text (Nah 2:2–11) collocates the same verbs (except עוה) in an explicitly military context (against Nineveh):

The scatterer (מפיץ) has come up against you. Guard the walls . . . For YHWH has returned the glory of Jacob like the glory of Israel, for plunderers (בַּקִּיִּם) have plundered them (בַּקִּיִּם) . . . Plunder (בִּזּוּ) the silver, plunder (בִּזּוּ) the gold! . . . Desolation (בִּוּקָה), desolated (מִבִּוּקָה) and destroyed (מִבִּלְקָה)!

Without positing a dependence relationship, this suggests a similar picture for Isa 24:1–3, namely divine judgment portrayed in terms of an invading military power.²⁴

Doyle goes so far as to propose the underlying metaphorical concept "YHWH is enemy," based largely on this combination of these related verbal roots.²⁵ These terms from the semantic domain of destruction, specifically military invasion, contribute to the cohesion of the subunit by portraying an overwhelming sense of invading, violent force.

The final marker of cohesion relates to the concluding clause and its conjunctive particle כִּי (v. 3c), which introduces a divine speech clause as the basis or assurance of judgment: *for YHWH has spoken this word*. The deictic phrase הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה points to a "word" elsewhere in the text. Some have proposed that "this word" refers to an earlier prophetic oracle such as Hos 4:1–10 or Isa 13:4–16, which would be consistent with the tendency of Isa 24–27 to allude to other texts.²⁶ These echoes are possible, but in my judgment, the immediate context of vv. 1–3 is the more likely referent of "this word," which anaphorically refers to the announcement of judgment.

²⁴ Because of these numerous lexical parallels, some have posited an intertextual relationship between Isa 24 and Nah 2—Polaski, *Authorizing an End*, 106; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 351; Hibbard entertains the possibility but ultimately dismisses it, given the lack of additional similarities (*Intertextuality*, 41). My sense is that Hibbard is correct, and that the shared terms should be explained simply by their appropriateness for the content of each text independently.

²⁵ Doyle, *Metaphorically Speaking*, 158–59.

²⁶ Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 55; Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 45. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 351.

In sum, vv. 1–3 constitute a tightly cohesive subunit held together by future-oriented verbs, focus on the earth and all humanity, collocation of military terminology, and authenticating basis in the divine word.

Elaborative Description of Judgment (24:4–13)

אבלה נבלה הארץ	⁴ The earth mourns, it withers;
אמללה נבלה תבל	the world languishes, it withers,
אמללו מרום עם ²⁷ הארץ	the high people of the earth languish.
והארץ חנפה תחת ישביה	⁵ For the earth lies polluted under its inhabitants,
כי עברו תורת	because they have transgressed the instructions,
חלפו חק	they have passed over the statute,
הפרו ברית עולם	they have broken the everlasting covenant.
על כן אלה אכלה ארץ	⁶ Therefore, a curse devours the earth,
ויאשמו ישבי בה	and those who inhabit it bear their guilt.
על כן חרו ישבי ארץ	Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are scorched,
ונשאר אנוש מזער	and only a few people are left.
אבל תירוש	⁷ The wine mourns,
אמללה גפן	the vine withers,
נאנחו כל שמחי לב	all the joyful of heart groan.
שבת משוש תפים	⁸ The joy of the tambourines stops,
חדל שאון עליזים	the roar of the exultant ones ceases,
שבת משוש כנור	the joy of the lyre stops.
בשיר לא ישתו יין	⁹ They will not drink wine with a song,
ימר שכר לשתיו	strong drink is bitter to its drinker.
נשברה קרית תהו	¹⁰ The city is broken down into chaos;
סגר כל בית מבוא	every house is closed off from entrance.
צוהה על היין בחוצות	¹¹ There is wailing about the wine in the streets,
ערבה כל שמחה	the sun has set on all joy, ²⁸
גלה משוש הארץ	the joy of the earth has gone away.
נשאר בעיר שמה	¹² Horror is left in the city,
ושאיה יכת שער	and the gate is beaten down into a desolation.
כי כה יהיה בקרב הארץ	¹³ For thus it will be in the midst of the earth,
בתוך העמים	amongst the peoples:
כנקף זית	like the beating of an olive tree,
כעוללת אם כלה בצי	like the gleanings when the grape harvest is complete.

²⁷ 1QIsa^a אמלל (singular, followed by the Syriac and Vulgate). MT vocalises עם as a noun (עם, *people*) rather than a preposition (עם, *with*). Either option is possible, since a collective singular noun such as עם can take a plural predicate (e.g. Exod 14:31). Either option is also contextually appropriate.

²⁸ The rendering of this clause is from Brevard Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 176.

The second subunit of this section elaborates upon the announcement of vv. 1–3, giving further description of the judgment as well as the reason for such a catastrophe. The subunit is bounded at the front by the concluding divine speech formula (v. 3), and at the end by a summarising כִּי-clause (v. 13). In addition, the following subunit (vv. 14–20) introduces a new participant, an unnamed "they" group. While some further divide vv. 4–13 (e.g. at v. 7),²⁹ it is more serviceable for the present purposes to work with a slightly longer passage.

As with the introduction, the term אֶרֶץ (הָ) is repeated frequently in vv. 4–13, signalling the continued theme of the earth's judgment. The personified earth is paralleled with the poetic word תֵּבֵל (*world*, v. 4). In terms of cohesion, the near-synonym תֵּבֵל is collocated with אֶרֶץ, which creates lexical cohesion across the two poetic lines, but it also helps narrow the semantic range of the term אֶרֶץ, an important interpretive question, given that the term אֶרֶץ occurs some 29 times in chs. 24–27, not counting pronominal references. The lexical range of the lexeme אֶרֶץ includes *dry ground* (as opposed to sea) (Gen 1:10), *geographic area* belonging to a certain people group (Jon 1:8), and the *created world* more generally. As with most lexemes, occasionally this results in ambiguity if the context does not make clear whether the term אֶרֶץ indicates a particular region, or the earth more generally. The nouns אֶרֶץ and תֵּבֵל are paired in a number of biblical texts, consistently referring to the world as the creation of YHWH, not to a specific land.³⁰ For instance, Isa 34:1 pairs the terms in poetic parallel in a worldwide context: "Draw near, O nations, to hear, and listen, O

²⁹ Doyle, *Metaphorically Speaking*, 162.

³⁰ 1 Sam 2:8 [10] (Hannah's song), 2 Sam 22:8, 16 (David's song of deliverance), Isa 13:5, 9, 11, 13; 14:12, 16, 17, 20, 21; 18:1–3; 34:1; Jer 10:10, 12; 51:15; Nah 1:5; as well as a large number of occurrences in Psalms, Proverbs, and Job.

peoples! Let the earth [הארץ] hear, and its fullness; the world [תבל], and all its offspring." In Isa 24, the collocation with the term תבל strongly suggests that here the term ארץ carries a universal sense.³¹ Combined with the lack of modifiers (e.g. *land of Judah*, *land of Israel*, *your land*), this collocation with תבל helps to clarify the scope of the announced judgment.³²

The subunit uses the language of lament, personifying the earth (הארץ) as a mourner. The verb pair אמל/אבל in particular is collocational as a prophetic trope for laments (see Isa 19:8; 24:7; 33:9; Jer 14:2; Hos 4:3; Joel 1:9, 10, 12; Lam 2:8). The language of lament includes "*the joyful of heart groan*" (v. 7) and *wailing* in the streets (v. 11). The movement within the subunit narrows from the earth as a whole (v. 4) to specific expressions of human celebration (v. 7). This can be compared with the specification at 24:2, which lists hyponyms of the more general "inhabitants of the earth." Several terms related to the cessation of human festivity occur in vv. 7–12, and almost every line includes a term or phrase associated with merrymaking: either alcohol (תירוש [wine, v. 7], גפן [vine, v. 7], שמחי לב [joyful of heart, v. 7], יין [wine, v. 9], שכר [strong drink, v. 9], היין [the wine, v. 11]) or music (תפים [tambourines, v. 8], כנור [lyre, v. 8]).³³ Urban imagery includes the nouns קריה (city, v. 10), בית (house, v. 10), חוצות (streets, v. 11), עיר (city, v. 12), and שער (gate, v. 12). While the focus of the description narrows at v. 7 from *earth* to more specific examples, it is difficult to

³¹ The Greek supports this understanding of the term ארץ with its rendering οἰκουμένη (*cosmos*, *world*) in Isa 24:1. Typically the LXX represents Hebrew ארץ with γῆ (*land*, *earth*), but here reflects an understanding of the term as the entirety of the inhabited world.

³² Pace Johnson, who argues that Judah and Jerusalem are the objects of judgment in Isa 24. He grants that the language is "cosmic," but argues that it hyperbolically refers to a national judgment of Judah (*Chaos*, 25–35).

³³ Like the inversion of social order (24:2), the removal of joyful sounds is a common motif in ancient curses, including the biblical prophets (Delbert R. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets*, BibOr 16 [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964], 57).

identify a "city section" or "city song" as has sometimes been proposed.³⁴ This is because the descriptions of the fallen city and the cessation of festivity are not distinct, as there is considerable lexical overlap between these verses, including יין (vv. 9, 11), שמחה (vv. 7, 11), and משוב (vv. 8, 11). The city of v. 10 is important not as the sole object of judgment, but as one exemplary object of judgment (see excursus below).

Unlike vv. 1–3, this elaborative subunit is characterised by *qatal* verbal forms, many of which are asyndetic (vv. 4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12).³⁵ This verb pattern is consistent throughout vv. 4–12. This sparseness of grammatical connections has a staccato effect, which is finally relieved with a *wāw* conjunction near the end of the subunit (v. 12, ושאיה). The clauses of the opening poetic triplet in v. 4 are syntactically parallel, feature rhyming verbs גבל, אבל, and אמל. Verse 7 reiterates both syntax and content of v. 4:

v. 4)	אבלה . . . הארץ	The earth . . . mourns,
	אמללה . . . תבל	The world . . . languishes,
	אמללו מרום	The heights languish.
v. 7)	אבל תירוש	The wine mourns,
	אמללה גפן	The vine languishes.

The final verse of the subunit (v. 13) summarises the first twelve verses of the

³⁴ Clements, for example, isolates the "city of chaos" unit (24:10–12) as a separate addition to the basic composition (24:1–6), along with 24:7–9 (end of festivities) and 24:13 (*Isaiah 1–39*, 200). Blenkinsopp cautions that this redaction hypothesis is "too restrictive of authorial licence and assumes, anachronistically, a clear distinction between city and countryside" (*Isaiah 1–39*, 350). Cf. Polaski, *Authorizing an End*, 83–84, who asserts that "no particular facet of that description should be privileged." He also states, rightly, that "the city has received too much attention from readers hoping against hope to find an historical allusion . . . in Isaiah 24–27. The city and its condition are not the central concern of 24:7–13. . . . The city should be seen as a 'Middletown,' representing the earth's urban life" (109).

³⁵ Couey suggests that poetry uses structural devices such as repetition to offset the lack of syntactic connections (*Reading the Poetry of First Isaiah*, 108). Given the paratactic style of this subunit, it is therefore not surprising to see significant repetition of various types.

announcement. It consists of a two-fold comparison, using the preposition כֹּ – to compare the judged earth to images of agricultural harvest.³⁶ It uses הארץ yet again to connect the similes with the aforementioned judgment. The comparison between a beaten olive tree and remaining humans is that of scarcity: the human population is drastically thinned. The scarcity theme also occurs explicitly in the very first verse of the composition: יהוה בוקק הארץ (*Yhwh is about the empty the earth*, v. 1), as well as in v. 6, אנוש מזער (*only a few people are left*).

Notice that the main verb of v. 13 switches from the *qatal*-chain, which characterised vv. 4–12, to *yiqtol* ("For thus *it will be*"). In this respect, v. 13 forms an aspectual bracket with the introduction (vv. 1–3) around the intervening (prophetic perfect) description of ruin.³⁷

Imperfective Introduction: vv. 1–3 (בוקק . . . ובולקה)

Perfective (Elaborative) Description: vv. 4–12 (אבלה . . .)

Imperfective Summary: v. 13 (כי כה יהיה . . .)

In Polaski's judgment, v. 13 "seems to break the flow of what precedes it, especially if one decides that the foregoing material centers on the destroyed city."³⁸ One might question the heavy emphasis on the city image, given that it does not appear at all in the announcement of judgment until v. 10. It is better to understand the composite

³⁶ Some have observed the similarity between Isa 24:13 and 17:6. The precise nature of this literary parallel is a matter of debate, however. On one side, Sweeney argues for a high context reading in which the author of 24:13 had in mind an entire storyline from ch. 17 ("Textual Citations," 42–3). On the other side, Hibbard explains the reuse as simply an appeal to familiar, authoritative language (*Intertextuality*, 46–49). Space does not permit further discussion, but in my view Hibbard's more conservative methodological approach provides a helpful caution with respect to intertextual analysis more generally.

³⁷ Johnson, *Chaos*, 21. Johnson considers these brackets to be authentic Isaianic material into which the *qatal* section has been inserted. In this reading, the intervening verses are an example of reinterpretation; the composer viewed vv. 4–12 as a fulfilment of the earlier Isaianic prophecy (24).

³⁸ Polaski, *Authorizing an End*, 84.

images of desolation and to interpret the aspectual shift here (v. 13) as a signal of summary. The double simile helps signal this as a structural marker of conclusion.³⁹

One final observation about this subunit is that it oscillates between earth and its (human) inhabitants, weaving together an affective description of the judged earth and humanity. After the initial picture of a languishing world (v. 4), the text alternates between the earth and the people whose actions prompted judgment: the earth lies polluted under its inhabitants because they have transgressed divine laws (v. 5). The tricolon following the כִּי conjunction in v. 5 gives more precisely the reason for the earth's defilement, using parallel expressions—עֲבָרוּ תוֹרַת (they have transgressed the instructions) חָלְפוּ חֶק (they have passed over the statute), and הִפְרוּ בְרִית עוֹלָם (they have broken the everlasting covenant).⁴⁰ Though one might tease out different nuances of each pair, the effect of the triple-reference is not the difference between them but the emphatic degree to which the earth-dwellers have disobeyed divine instruction.

The precise referent of these instructions, especially the *everlasting covenant*, is debated. The phrase בְּרִית עוֹלָם is used for several different covenants in the Hebrew Bible, though in the context of Isa 24:5, it is often connected to the Noachic covenant because of its worldwide scope.⁴¹ Others, however, see the Mosaic covenant as the primary referent,⁴² or even a combination of several biblical covenants.⁴³ The general

³⁹ Cf. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 261. Other examples of similes used to structure a poem include: Isa 51:23; Jer 15:18; Amos 5:24; and Hab 3:19. Watson, 258, also notes that Hebrew poetic parallelism often results in such paired similes (cf. Prov 2:4; Hos 5:12).

⁴⁰ These three synonymous clauses are often explained as glosses. Clements, for example, suggests that the first two clauses were originally glosses added to clarify "they have broken the everlasting covenant" (*Isaiah 1–39*, 201).

⁴¹ Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 183; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 351–2.

⁴² Johnson, *Chaos*, 27–9.

⁴³ Robert Chisholm lists some eight different referents for the phrase בְּרִית עוֹלָם in the Old Testament, including the Noachic covenant (Gen 9:16); the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 17:7); the covenant of circumcision (Gen 17:13); the Sabbath (Exod 31:16); the bread of the presence (Lev 24:8); the priests' portion of offerings (Num 18:19); Phinehas's priestly line (Num 25:13); the Davidic

silence about the law of Moses/Sinai in the book of Isaiah suggests that the laws in Isa 24:5 refer to something besides the law of Moses.⁴⁴ Given the universal scope of this passage, it is better to identify the broken "eternal covenant" with a standard applicable to all humanity, such as the prohibition of murder (cf. Num 35:33–34; Isa 26:21).

Excursus: The "City of Chaos"

The obscure phrase קרית תהו (Isa 24:10) has long puzzled scholars and fuelled considerable speculation. The unnamed city is a recurring motif in Isa 24–27, but this excursus focuses on the rendering of the expression קרית תהו in 24:10 (cf. Chapter 8 for a discussion of the city-motif in Isa 24–27). The phrase consists of two nouns in construct relation and is typically glossed "the city of chaos." There is, however, reason to question this rendering, in terms of both grammar and interpretive implications.

The rendering "city of chaos" construes the absolute noun תהו (*chaos*, *disorder*) as an attributive genitive modifying קרית (*chaotic city*, or a quasi-proper name *City of Chaos*).⁴⁵ While the Hebrew construct often marks an attributive

covenant (2 Sam 23:5); and God's eschatological promises to Israel (Isa 55:3; 61:8; Jer 32:40; 50:5; Ezek 16:60; 37:26). Note the absence of the Sinai covenant, as it is never explicitly referred to as an "eternal covenant" (ברית עולם) ("The 'Everlasting Covenant' and the 'City of Chaos': Intentional Ambiguity and Irony in Isaiah 24," *CTR* 6.2 [1993], 239–40).

Polaski explores several texts associated with the *eternal covenant* and the Priestly writers, as well as the *eternal covenant* associated with the davidic covenant. He does not isolate one text or tradition as the background of the term in Isa 24, but reflecting his general approach to Isa 24–27, concludes that both temple worship (sacerdotal) and davidic hopes (monarchical) are behind the use of the term in Isa 24 (*Authorizing an End*, 117–45).

⁴⁴ Blenkinsopp observes that Isaiah and the Psalter are similar in their lack of reference to the Sinai law. For Isaiah, the term *torah* (תורה) generally refers to a prophetic "word of YHWH" coming from Zion, rather than a set of written commandments. Remarkably *torah* in Isaiah is to reach all nations, i.e. to be "internationalized" (*The Beauty of Holiness: Re-Reading Isaiah in the Light of the Psalms* [London: T&T Clark, 2019], 2–5).

⁴⁵ For example, Hanson incorporates the "city of chaos" of 24:10 into his social paradigm by

relationship, this is certainly not its only function. The noun תהו could also be taken as an accusative result of the verb נשברה, thus modifying the verbal action.⁴⁶ As such, the clause is rendered, "The city is broken down *into chaos*." This construal of the clausal syntax is parallel to clauses in vv. 10b and 12:

- | | | |
|-------|-----------------------------------|--|
| v. 10 | נשברה קרית תהו
סגר כל בית מבוא | The city is broken down <i>into chaos</i> ;
Every house has been barred <i>from entry</i> . |
| v. 12 | נשאר בעיר שמה
ושאיה יכת שער | Devastation is left in the town,
And the gate has been smashed into ruins. |

Leaving the subject קריה unmodified in translation is also consistent with the anonymity of the city elsewhere in these chapters. Thus it seems more likely that the fallen city of ch. 24 is not intended to be a particular City of Chaos but rather a generic "city" as symbol for human habitation targeted for judgment. The OG reflects this understanding by rendering the term קריה generically and by not representing the term תהו at all.⁴⁷ Moreover, as argued above, the city is not the centre of judgment per se, but rather a representative element in the wider picture of worldwide judgment which will leave nothing untouched, natural or human. It is, therefore, not a particular or cryptic "City of Chaos," but rather one of many objects that will experience divine judgment: the earth, the inhabitants of the earth, the world, the wine, the vine, the joyful of heart, musical instruments, revellers, the city, every

suggesting that, in the eyes of the visionaries, the "city of chaos" is Jerusalem ruled by the hierocratic party (*Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 126).

⁴⁶ This reading was proposed by William Irwin, "The City of Chaos in Isa 24,10 and the Genitive of Result," *Bib* (1994), 401–3. He differentiates between the surface structure of a text and its meaning (deep structure), which sometimes diverge in translation. Irwin's study brings a needed syntagmatic sensitivity to this key verse and highlights the way a translated gloss can inadvertently colour an entire discussion. For adverbial genitive, see Waltke and O'Connor, *Syntax*, 146–8.

⁴⁷ Isa 24:10a OG: ἡρημώθη πᾶσα πόλις. The Targum and Syriac also do not reflect a genitive rendering of the clause. The Targum reads, *their city is broken down, devastated* (אַתְּבַרַת קִרְתֵּיהוֹן צְדִיאַת), and the Syriac, *the city was plundered* (Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 315).

house, the streets, and the gate. This understanding of 24:10a invites an inclusive reading of the city which does not limit itself to any single historical referent.

Clarification and Restated Judgment (24:14–20)

המה ישאו קולם ירנו ⁴⁸	¹⁴ They raise their voice, they shout for joy.
בגאון יהוה צהלו מים	At the loftiness of YHWH, they shout from the west.
על כן בארים כבדו יהוה	¹⁵ "Therefore in the east, honour YHWH;
באיי הים שם יהוה	in the islands of the west, the name of YHWH,
אלהי ישראל	the God of Israel!"
מכנף הארץ זמרת שמענו	¹⁶ From the edge of the earth, we heard songs—
צבי לצדיק	"Beauty to the Righteous One!"
ואמר	But I say,
רזי ⁴⁹ לי רזי לי אוי לי	"I am gaunt, I am gaunt! Woe to me!"
בגדים בגדו	The faithless ones act faithlessly;
ובגד בוגדים בגדו	the faithless ones are utterly unfaithful.
פחד ופחת ופח עליך	¹⁷ Terror and pit and trap are upon you,
יושב הארץ	O inhabitant of the earth.
והיה הנס מקול הפחד	¹⁸ And whoever flees from the sound of the terror
יפל אל הפחת	will fall into the pit,
והעולה מתוך הפחת	and whoever goes up from the bottom of the pit
ילכד בפח	will be caught by the trap.
כי ארבות ממרום נפתחו	Indeed, the windows from the heights are opened,
וירעשו מוסדי ארץ	and the foundations of the earth quake.
רעה התרעעה הארץ	¹⁹ The earth is completely smashed,
פור התפוררה ארץ	the earth is utterly shaken,
מוט התמוטטה ארץ	the earth reels.
נוע תנוע ארץ כשכור	²⁰ The earth totters like a drunkard,
והתנוודדה כמלונה	and it sways back and forth like a field house.
וכבד עליה פשעה	Its sin weighs heavily upon it,
ונפלה ולא תסיף קום	and it falls and will not rise again.

This third subunit interrupts the announcement of judgment to introduce, without conjunction or other transition, a new speech participant—an unspecified plural

⁴⁸ Some interpreters place the *atnach* after יהוה בגאון יהוה (BHS; William Irwin, "The Punctuation of Isaiah 24:14–16a and 25:4c–5," *QBB* 46.2 [1984], 218; Gray, *Book of Isaiah*, 406, 417). However, it is preferable to have two lines of four words each, rather than two lines of three words + one line of only two words.

⁴⁹ The *hapax* רזי is difficult, as reflected in the OG rendering, which omits the expression and reworks the verse (with the plus τὸν νόμον [*the law*]) (cf. Wilson de Angelo Cunha, *LXX Isaiah 24:1–26:6 as Interpretation and Translation: A Methodological Discussion* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 75. See below for further discussion.

subject (המה), whose identity is not immediately clear. Besides this new actant, the tone (at least as reflected by the new actants) shifts from lament to joy.⁵⁰ The celebratory tone is conveyed by hymn-like speech, which may strike the reader as discordant, given the terrible images of the preceding verses. Why would anyone celebrate the terrible destruction and loss of human life just announced?

A focal discourse element in this subunit (vv. 14–20) is speech, expressed through the use of the speaking words קול (*voice*, 14a), ירנו (*they shout for joy*, 14a), צהלו (*they shout*, 14b), שמענו (*we heard*, v. 16a), זמרת (*songs*, v. 16a), and אמר (*I say*, v. 16b). The participants are the unnamed "they" (v. 14), the addressees of the imperative of v. 15, and the first person singular speaker in v. 16b. The far flung location of the speakers is also significant, as they speak from *the west* (ים), *the east* (ארים), *the islands of the sea* (איי הים), *the edges of the earth* (כנף הארץ). This widespread shouting corresponds to the worldwide scope of the announced judgment (vv. 1–13).

A particular difficulty for the subunit is the identity of the speakers, the unnamed "they" (המה) of v. 14. This pronominal ambiguity is, often to our frustration, a frequent occurrence in the poetic portions of Isa 1–39, particularly in regard to identification of a given speaker.⁵¹ The versions suggest that early translators also felt a need for clarification here. The OG finds two contrasting (δὲ) groups: those who experience the preceding destruction (οὗτοι φωνῇ βοήσονται) and a separate group of singers, who are spared destruction (οἱ δὲ καταλειφθέντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς

⁵⁰ Polaski, *Authorizing an End*, 86.

⁵¹ Samuel Meier finds that the non-prose portions of Isaiah 1–39 generally "remain imprecise as to the source of speaking voices" (*Speaking of Speaking: Marking Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Bible* [Leiden: Brill, 1992], 242).

עֹפְרָנִים). The Targumist identifies the group as the righteous remnant, connecting the "they" group back to the remnant of v. 13.⁵²

Modern scholars interpret the group of Isa 24:14 in diverse ways. Some commentators have proposed that the group represents the faithful, who are prematurely rejoicing. The group has an overly optimistic attitude towards the timing of YHWH's eschatological plans. In this case, "they" are a group which mistakenly believes salvation has arrived and the period of suffering is complete, prompting prophetic correction.⁵³ A second interpretation argues that the speakers are Judeans (or others) who are actually objects of judgment but are not aware of their dire situation.⁵⁴ Similarly, Sweeney understands these celebrating figures to mistakenly believe that God's coming will release them from the curse upon the earth (v. 6), not realising that their own guilt is the reason for the curse.⁵⁵ In this second view, the problem is not timing, but a misconception about culpability.

It is possible that v. 14 uses an "impersonal" construction, without reference to the subject beyond the statement of their action. There are similar ambiguous cases, where the identity of such a *המה*-group is not clear or is used impersonally (e.g. Isa 35:2; Jer 17:15; Ezek 21:5 [20:49]; Hos 13:2; 1 Sam 19:24).⁵⁶ In such cases,

⁵² "For thus shall *the righteous* be left alone in the midst of the world among the kingdoms . . . They will lift up their voice" (vv. 13a, 14a; cf. v. 15; trans. Bruce Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation, Apparatus and Notes*, The Aramaic Bible 11 [Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1987], 47–48).

⁵³ Polaski argues that the prophet does not castigate the singers of vv. 14–16 for their act of singing, but responds with a tone of lament that they are still under the curse for covenant violation. The prophetic response (vv. 16b–18a) "does not contradict the first [24:14–16a] as much as it exposes its lack of completion" (*Authorizing an End*, 130).

⁵⁴ Johnson, *Chaos*, 38–9. Blenkinsopp suggests the singers represent an official liturgical group, who are then censured by a more sectarian writer (*Beauty of Holiness*, 47).

⁵⁵ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–4*, 52.

⁵⁶ The "unspecified" pronoun is also used in English. For example, "They say he's an engaging writer," is not referring to any particular group of people. Instead, the pronoun here is functioning impersonally. Similar to a passive construction, the use of the pronoun draws attention to the verbal

the pronoun (which is normally cohesive) does not refer to anything in the discourse and is therefore not a cohesive element. However, because Hebrew is a pro-drop language (i.e. does not require an explicit pronoun), the inclusion of this pronoun is remarkable.

Beuken argues that this is the case, namely that these figures represent a new discourse element, represented with an independent pronoun in order to distinguish them from the first-person speaker of v. 16b.⁵⁷ In this view, "they" (הֵמָּה) has no reference to the preceding text, and the identity is known only through the verbal actions (i.e. raising their voice, shouting) and their location (from the sea). In this view, nothing survived the preceding judgment (vv. 1–13). The pronoun in question is "disjunctive and emphatic," particularised *in relation to* some other actant, in this case the first-person speaker of v. 16b.⁵⁸ This first-person speech verb (וַאֲמַר), Beuken argues, is a backgrounded past tense which should be rendered "Yes, I have said" rather than a contrastive.⁵⁹ In this reading, this clause (v. 16b) "presents a deed which the prophet formerly performed *at the level of the book of Isaiah itself*," namely a recognisable key phrase in ch. 21.⁶⁰ An important element in Beuken's reading that

action instead of the agent of the action: "They're mending the road out there." An unspecified pronoun can also place rhetorical distance between the speaker and the truth (or falsehood) of the claim, or lend an air of authority to a claim: "They say it will snow tomorrow" (see Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion*, 53).

⁵⁷ Beuken, "The Prophet Leads the Readers into Praise: Isaiah 25:1–10 in Connection with Isaiah 24:14–23," in *Studies in Isaiah 24–27*, 124.

⁵⁸ Beuken, "Praise," 124, citing Joüon and Muraoka, *Grammar*, §146a, 1–3p.

⁵⁹ Wilson de Angelo Cunha argues for a similar non-contrastive interpretation of the response, based on LXX Isa 24:14–16. Based on a Greek plus (*ones rejecting the law*, v. 16), he argues that the "I" statement of v. 16b is *not* a counter-assertion, but a statement of doom for the faithless (not the singers of vv. 14–16a) ("A Brief Discussion of MT Isaiah 24, 14–16," *Bib* 90.4 [2009], 542–3). Cunha's observations are illuminating for the text's early reception, but his argument for MT Isa 24:14–16 relies heavily on the admittedly "interpretive" Greek rendering (with both pluses and minuses), which seems to be a particularly shaky foundation in this case. Cf. Hays's observation that the Greek translator was "completely flummoxed" by v. 16 ("Make Peace with Me," 14 n. 62).

⁶⁰ Beuken, "Praise," 134, emphasis original. Besides the emphatic repetition of the root בָּגַד, Beuken lists other parallels between Isa 24:14–17 and Isa 21:1–10, including reference to the sea (יָם),

distinguishes it from the aforementioned interpretive options is that in it vv. 14–16 do not express chronological progression. Instead, the first person speaker recalls something already spoken, earlier in the prophetic book. Thus, these unnamed speakers are properly recognising YHWH's majesty in the predicted downfall of the city.

This reading is plausible, and it provides a helpful explanation of the independent pronoun's discourse function (i.e. signalling a relationship with the responding "I" speaker in v. 16b). However, the weight of the evidence lies, in my estimation, on a different interpretation. First, "they" receive a response from a first-person speaker, who addresses the "inhabitant of the earth" directly (vocative) and appears to reject their songs of praise and restate the judgment in even stronger terms (vv. 16b–20). This response suggests that the הַמָּה-group are those addressed by the vocative, earth-dwellers destined for catastrophe. This contrast is supported by the word-play between the exclamations of the "they" group: צְבִי לְצִדִּיק (v. 16a) versus the words of the "I" figure רִזִּי לִי (v. 16b). Beuken's assessment that הַמָּה-actant is a new element in the discourse is also not the most straightforward reading, as it is natural that the pronoun הַמָּה would refer to the inhabitants of the earth that have been central to the text in vv. 1–13—its *inhabitants* (v. 1), *people* and *priest* (v. 2), *high people of the earth* (v. 4), *its inhabitants* (v. 5), *its inhabitants* (v. 6), *few people left* (v. 6), *joyful of heart* (v. 7), *the peoples of the earth* (v. 13).

A final clue to their identity, which substantiates this reading, is based on the lexeme זָמַר (*song*). Verse 16 describes the voices as *songs* (זִמְרָה), a noun found only

a grave circumstance for the speaker, the use of the vocative (21:2; 24:16), and similar content: "All the joyful of heart sigh" (24:7) and "All the sighing I bring to an end" (21:2); "It falls and will not rise again" (24:20) and "Fallen, fallen, is Babylon" (21:9).

twice in the whole prophetic corpus—Isa 25:5 and 24:16.⁶¹ The term's rareness and the close proximity of these two occurrences is suggestive. As we will see below, the term in ch. 25 is used in the context of hymnic praise in reference to the silenced "*song* of the ruthless." The interaction between the singing earth-dwellers and the prophet in this unit (24:14–16) describes the silencing of their "songs," while the following hymn celebrates the same thing—the silencing of the "songs" of the ruthless (25:5).⁶² The focal element is therefore *not* timing, but rather the unavoidability of the coming destruction, a theme introduced at the very beginning of the composition (24:2). In summary, the המה-group of 24:14 is best understood as an anaphoric reference to the multiple occurrences of the "inhabitants of the earth" in vv. 1–13, and also as a (non-cohesive) strengthening of the contrast between the singers and the following prophetic voice of woe against the inhabitants of the earth.

In the book of Isaiah, the prophet does not often speak in the first person (contrast, e.g., Ezek 1:1 or Zech 1:8). The first instance of first-person speech of the prophet in the book is in the throne room scene of ch. 6, in which the quoted speech includes a woe statement. In response to the vision of YHWH on his throne, the prophet speaks in the first person (6:5):

ואמר		And I said,
אוי לי כי נדמיתי		" <i>Woe is me!</i> For I am silenced,
כי איש טמא שפתים אנכי		for I am a man of unclean lips,
ובתוך עם טמא שפתים אנכי יושב		and I dwell among a people of unclean lips.
כי את המלך יהוה צבאות ראו עיני		For my eyes have seen the King YHWH of hosts!"

⁶¹ The noun זמיר occurs outside the latter prophets in 2 Sam 23:1; Ps 95:2; 119:54; and Job 35:10. Its cognate verb occurs frequently in the psalms, and the related noun זמרה occurs four times (Isa 51:3; Amos 5:23; Ps 81:3; 98:5).

⁶² There are parallels to this "rejoicing in vain" idea in the nations oracles of Isaiah (14:29–30 [Philistia]; 15:9 [Moab], 22:12–14 [Jerusalem]).

The opening exclamation of woe is the same as that in Isa 24:16: *Woe is me!* (see also Isa 6:8, 11). Occasionally an unnamed first-person speaker appears in the oracles about the nations, as in the Valley of Vision oracle, which laments the destruction of "my people" (22:4), or the "wilderness of the sea" oracle (Isa 21:1–10), which claims to be the recipient of a *harsh vision* of the traitor betraying, the destroyer destroying (הבוגד בוגד, Isa 21:1). The first-person speech in Isa 24:16b echoes the "woe" of ch. 6 and the "betrayal" lament of ch. 21, and expresses lament at the imminent destruction.

Contributing to the statement's obscurity is the doubled expression רזי לי, since the form רזי is unattested elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.⁶³ Scholarly opinion regarding its morphology is divided between two main possibilities: "my secret," an Aramaism (רז or רזא) likely deriving from Persian, with a first-singular suffix,⁶⁴ or "leanness," or related substantive derivative of the Hebrew root רזה (*to be lean, gaunt*).⁶⁵ The ancient translations appear to struggle with the term רזי in 24:16 as well, either omitting it altogether (OG, which adds a reference to the law [νόμος]),⁶⁶ or representing the Aramaic sense and adding interpretive elements (μυστήριον—Symmachus, Theodotian; Vulgate; the Targum adds that the "secret" is about reward

⁶³ Wildberger sums up the lexical impasse: "No one knows for sure what is meant by רזי (*Isaiah* 13–27, 493).

⁶⁴ Sawyer renders the expression "My secret is with me!" citing the "desperate philology" undergirding attempts to connect the word with the Hebrew root רזה ("My Secret Is with Me' [*Isaiah* 24.16]: Some Semantic Links between *Isaiah* 24–27 and *Daniel*," in *Understanding Poets and Prophets*, ed. A.G. Auld, JSOTSup 152 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993], 312–13); also Niehaus, "Rāz-Pēšar in *Isaiah* XXIV," *VT* 31.3 (1981), 376–78; Blenkinsopp, *Beauty of Holiness*, 46.

⁶⁵ Wildberger, *Isaiah* 13–27, 493; and Hays, "Hebrew Diachrony," 8. A minority of commentators believe the verse to be corrupt, referring to neither of these two possibilities (e.g. Grätz, "Die Auslegung," 9).

⁶⁶ Mirjam Van der Vorm-Croughs offers the possibility that the Greek translator understood רזי according to its meaning in later Hebrew (*secret*), but, considering it inappropriate for the context, deleted it (*The Old Greek of Isaiah: An Analysis of its Phases and Minus*, SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies 61 [Atlanta: SBL, 2014], 459).

for the righteous and punishment for the wicked).⁶⁷ It is unsurprising that the Greek recensions appear to gloss the word רזי with μυστήριον μου, since this is the sense the noun רז carried in late second temple texts. The Aramaic term רז (*secret*) occurs several times in Daniel in reference to the revelation of dreams,⁶⁸ and is found frequently in Qumran texts, e.g. column 7 of the Habakkuk Peshar (7:5, 8, 15), referring to divine secrets.⁶⁹

Despite the versional support for *my secret* (רזי) in Isa 24:16 and the use of the term in post-biblical Hebrew, this reading has difficulties. First, it is unable to adequately account for the *yôd*-suffix, since the resulting syntactical situation includes both a possessive pronoun (1cs suffix) and another possessive construction (*lāmed* + 1cs suffix).⁷⁰ The second, more serious, problem is that the idea of a mystery or secret is difficult to understand within the context of Isa 24,⁷¹ though admittedly some scholars do not find it problematic. The preceding verses (24:1–13) have already announced the coming catastrophe, which is restated here, so (unlike

⁶⁷ Willi-Plein, "Das Geheimnis der Apokalyptik," *VT* 27 (1977), 72. Pace Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 189–90.

⁶⁸ Dan 2:18, 19, 27, 28, 29, 30, 47 (2x); 4:6 [Eng. 9]. Interestingly, the Aram. term רז is used only in the court narrative portions of the book of Daniel, not in the apocalyptic visions of the latter half of the book.

⁶⁹ Ian Young, "Late Biblical Hebrew and the Qumran Peshar Habakkuk," *JHS* 8, (2008), 19.

The noun רז is found frequently in the Qumran texts, often carrying a sense of divine revelation. For example, the phrase רזי דברי עבדי (*mysteries of the words of his servants*) occurs in the Habakkuk Peshar in reference to the revealed interpretation of Scripture (1QpHab 7:4–5) (Matthew Goff, "The Mystery of Creation in 4QInstruction," *DSD* 10.2 [2003], 165). The term also appears in *1 Enoch* (103:2; 104:12; 106:19 ["For I know the mysteries (רזי) of the holy ones, for that LORD showed (them) to me and made (them) known to me, and I read (them) in the tablets of heaven"]) and its cognate in the War Scroll (e.g. 1Q33 III, 9, רזי אל [*mysteries of God*]).

The word occurs in Sirach, in a non-eschatological context: לפני זר אל תעש רז כי לא תדע מה ילד ספר (Sir 8:18): "Do not reveal a *secret* to a stranger for you do not know what it will give rise to in the end" (MS A 3r:26–27, transcr. by Martin G. Abegg and trans. by Benjamin H. Parker and Martin G. Abegg).

⁷⁰ Admittedly, this double-possessive syntactical pattern is attested elsewhere, but it is unusual. In these cases, it appears to to emphasise the state of possession (*my own*) (cf. 1 Sam 25:33; 2 Sam 22:2; Jer 12:9; Ps 27:2; Ps 144:2; Song 2:16; 6:3 לוֹדִי לִי [*my lover is mine*])). For Isa 24:16, this would require a translation such as "My secret is *mine*!" or more idiomatically, "[It is] my *own* secret!"

⁷¹ Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 493.

the dream reports of Daniel) it is difficult to imagine how a revealed mystery fits into this text.⁷²

The second option is more satisfying, since there is a plausible morphological explanation for רזי as a nominalised form of the Hebrew root רזה. If the word רזי is a noun derived from the tri-radical root רזה, it follows a known nominalisation pattern in biblical Hebrew (*qatil*), taking the expected form for III-ה roots (which replace the final weak radical with a *yôd*). Examples of this nominalisation pattern include the following.⁷³

Verbal Root	Noun	Adjective
ענה [<i>qal</i>] to be wretched [<i>ni.</i>] to become weak	עָנִי <i>poverty, misery,</i> <i>oppression</i>	עָנִי <i>wretched, poor</i>
נקה [<i>ni.</i>] to be free, unmarried	—	נָקִי <i>free</i>
חלה [<i>qal, ni.</i>] to be ill, tired	חָלִי <i>illness, suffering</i>	—
ראה [<i>qal</i>] to see [<i>ni.</i>] to appear	רָאִי <i>sight, appearance</i>	—
רזה [<i>ni.</i>] to be lean, shrink away	רָזִי * <i>leanness</i>	—

This explanation of the term רזי in 24:16b accounts for the *yôd*-suffix as part of the nominal morphology, alleviating the doubled possessive construction. Moreover, it is also more appropriate contextually as an idiom for woe (cf. Isa 17:4). The assonant repetition of the quoted speech (רזי לי רזי לי אי לי) suggests a close relationship between the terms רזי and the woe formula, which in turn receive explanation in the

⁷² Hays, *Make Peace with Me*, 14 n. 61; Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 493.

⁷³ Cf. John Huehnergard, "Biblical Hebrew Nominal Patterns," in *Epigraphy, Philology, and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Jeremy M. Hutton and Aaron D. Rubin (Atlanta: SBL 2015), 41; GKC §93 vv; §84^a c, ε; §84^a l; and Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, vol. 1, trans. James Martin (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1884), 431. Ibn Ezra mentions the related noun רזון "leanness" in Ps 56:15 (Friedländer, *Commentary of Ibn Ezra*, 112).

following statement (I am distressed *because* "the faithless ones act faithlessly . . ."). However precisely one decides to render the expression, it should be based on the Hebrew root רזה and not the Aramaic רז (*mystery*).

Cohesion in Unit 1 (Isa 24:1–20)

The discussion above identified the main cohesive ties within three subunits of the announcement of judgment: introduction (vv. 1–3), elaboration (vv. 4–13), and clarification and restatement (vv. 14–20). The introduction establishes the main theme (i.e. judgment of the earth), and the rest of the unit fills in the picture, including its cause. The introduction also begins a highly stylised poetic form, including alliteration: e.g. בלק / בקק (v. 1), repeated throughout, e.g. אבל / נבל (v. 4), and the five-fold בגדים בגדו ובגד בוגדים בגדו (v. 16). The distinctive syntactical pattern combined with word-play also characterises the unit:

(1)	בוקק	הארץ	ובולקה
(3)	הבוקק והבוז	תיבוק תביז	הארץ
(4)	אבלה אמללה אמללו	נבלה נבלה	הארץ תבל מרום עם הארץ
(7)	אבל אמללה נאנחו	תירוש גפן כל שמחי לב	
(19)	רעה פור מוט	התרעעה התפוררה התמוטטה	הארץ ארץ ארץ
(20)	נוע	תנוע	ארץ (כשכיר)

The syntactical pattern is repeated several times: infinitive absolute + finite verb + ארץ(ה) object in vv. 3 (2x), 19 (3x), and 20. Even where the infinitive absolute is lacking, the selection of verbal forms creates a similar rhyme (v. 4). Given these

striking syntactical and lexical similarities between the opening of this section and vv. 19–20, it is best to read them as an *inclusio* around the first unit of the discourse.

One of the most serious challenges to cohesion in this unit (24:1–20) is its changing verb tenses. The introduction (vv. 1–3) uses imperfective verbal forms, which places the announcement of judgment in the future. However, the elaboration of the announcement uses mostly *qatal* forms (vv. 4–12, 19–20), which some believe describes a past event.⁷⁴ Within the context of vv. 1–3, however, these *qatal* forms constitute "descriptive, 'backgrounded' elaborations" of the announcement of 24:1–3.⁷⁵ More specifically, these verbs can be considered "prophet perfects" which do not refer to a past event, but continue the future-oriented announcement of vv. 1–3.⁷⁶ The prophetic perfect has been associated with the narration of prophetic visionary experiences.⁷⁷ That is, the vision is in the prophet's past, explaining the use of the past tense (analogous to dream reports, "I saw in my dream . . ."). Thus, in the case of Isa 24:4–12, the *qatal* (or "perfective") verbs may reflect the past visionary experience from the perspective of the prophet, or at least a residual style from this

⁷⁴ Some explain the *qatal* verbs as past tense, indicating separate "songs" (24:4–6, 7–9, 10–12) (Eissfeldt, *Old Testament*, 323–4). Others explain the *qatal* forms as present tense, signifying the preliminary effects of the judgment. So, according to Skinner, these are early signs of judgment and represent the composer's belief that he is living in the last days (*The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, Chapters i–xxxix*, CBSC [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897], 193). Still others explain the *qatal* forms as future tense, rhetorically conveying a sense of certainty in YHWH's coming judgment (Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah*, 449) or perhaps even "playing with [the] audience" by waiting until v. 13 to reveal that the destruction is still to come (Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 313–15). Kaiser also takes all of vv. 1–13 as "pure prophecy" (*Isaiah 13–39*, 181); also Clements (*Isaiah 1–39*, 200) and Redditt ("Isaiah 24–27," 321).

⁷⁵ Bosman, "Syntactic Cohesion," 32.

⁷⁶ The so-called "prophetic perfect" is a debated term, and its use is complicated by the lack of consensus regarding biblical Hebrew tense and aspect more generally. G. L. Klein, "The 'Prophetic Perfect'," *JNSL* 16 (1990), 45–60, examines the references to the "prophetic perfect" cited in Hebrew and Aramaic grammars and concludes that many do not fall decisively under this label. Nonetheless, he acknowledges the term as a grammatical category but suggests it is a misnomer, given its use outside the prophetic corpus. Klein does not analyse the linguistic or generic situations in which the "prophetic perfect" is found, so unfortunately much is still left to intuition.

⁷⁷ Max Rogland, *Alleged Non-Past Uses of Qatal in Classical Hebrew* (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2003), 83.

developmental past.⁷⁸ In this view, rather than explain the *qatal* verbs as anomalies, one must instead explain the occurrence of the *yiqtol*s within primarily *qatal* passages (e.g. Isa 24:9; within this unit, these verbs are almost all non-verb-initial, whereas the *qatal* verbs are all verb-initial). Understanding these *qatal* verbs (beginning at v. 4) as prophetic perfects is consistent with the opening announcement, but also with the summarising conclusions to the subunits at vv. 13 and 20, which pick up the opening imperfective verbs—*w^eqatal* and *yiqtol*. These future-oriented statements frame and summarise the *qatal* descriptions of each subunit.⁷⁹

The most repeated word across these twenty verses is the noun הארץ (usually definite), which occurs some 17 times (vv. 1, 3 [elided once], 4 [2x], 5, 6 [2x], 11, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19 [3x], and 20), along with 7 occurrences of its feminine pronoun (vv. 1 (3x), 5, 6, 20 [2x]), and one use of the near-synonym תבל (v. 4). This lexical repetition contributes to a consistency of theme throughout the section, namely the desolation of the world and those living in it. The description oscillates between the ruined land itself and the people, which suggests a close connection between the two

⁷⁸ Rogland argues that the prophetic perfect is better understood in terms of "the nature of the event . . . referred to" (*Uses of Qatal*, 65). If the event was a prophetic vision, then the *qatal* verbs refer to this past visionary experience. That function is analogous to the past tense *qatal* used in dream or vision reports. Rather than indicating "certainty" or "vividness," the *qatal* of prophetic oracles refers to "the vision itself that lies in the prophet's past" (72–73). See Rogland, *Uses of Qatal*, 72 n. 55 for a defence of the assumption that prophetic literature is visionary regardless of explicit vision marker. He cites, for example, the superscription on some prophetic books—including Isaiah—which uses the noun הזון or the verb הזה.

⁷⁹ Such alternation between tenses is not uncommon in prophetic literature. Driver observes the prophetic perfect-*yiqtol* phenomenon this way: "Sometimes the perfect appears thus only for a single word; sometimes, as though nothing more than an ordinary series of past historical events were being described, it extends over many verses in succession: continually the series of perfects is interspersed with the simple future forms, as the prophet shifts his point of view, at one moment contemplating the events he is describing from the real standpoint of the present, at another moment looking back upon them as accomplished and done, and so viewing them from an ideal position in the future" (*A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew*, 3rd ed. [Oxford: Clarendon, 1892], §14).

objects, perhaps even an intertwined fate. For example, the object of v. 1 is the land, and of v. 2 is its inhabitants. Similar shifts from impersonal earth to personal agents take place at vv. 4, 6, 7, and 13. Yet the responsibility for the languishing of the world is placed squarely on its human citizens.

3.2. Unit 2 (24:21–23)

והיה ביום ההוא	²¹ And it will happen on that day,
יפקד יהוה	YHWH will punish
על צבא המרום במרום	the hosts of the heights in the heights,
ועל מלכי האדמה על האדמה	and the kings of the land on the land.
ואספו אספה	²² And they will be gathered together,
אסיר ⁸⁰ על בור	a prisoner into a pit;
וסגרו על מסגר	and they will be shut up in a dungeon,
ומרב ימים יפקדו	and they will be punished for many days.
וחפרה הלבנה	²³ And the moon will be abashed,
ובושה החמה	and the sun ashamed,
כי מלך יהוה צבאות בהר ציון	for YHWH of hosts reigns on Mt. Zion
ובירושלם ⁸¹ ונגד זקניו כבוד	in Jerusalem, before his elders in glory.

Given the introductory formula "it will happen on that day" and the beginning of a new section in 25:1, there is little disagreement that vv. 21–23 constitutes its own unit. Although this temporal expression may refer to a past event (e.g. Jer 39:16), it more often refers to the future, whether "merely futuristic" or eschatological.⁸² The unit also contains distinctive vocabulary found nowhere else in Isa 24–27 (e.g. האדמה [the land] instead of the term used elsewhere [הארץ]), which contribute to its distinctness as a literary unit.

⁸⁰ Christopher Hays, "The Date and Message of Isaiah 24–27," 19, n. 44 omits אסיר, following both 1QIsa^a and LXX.

⁸¹ The connecting *wāw* on ובירושלם does not signal a second location (i.e. Mt. Zion and Jerusalem), but rather introduces an appositional phrase (i.e. on Mt. Zion, *that is* Jerusalem); cf. Waltke and O'Connor, *Syntax*, 648–49.

⁸² Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, rev. ed. [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996], 233–34). For a fuller discussion of the uses of the phrase ביום ההוא, see Simon J. DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: Time and History in the Old Testament* (London: S.P.C.K., 1975).

Whereas the syntax of vv. 4–20 has a staccato-effect that results from omission of *wāw* and other clausal conjunctions, this unit is more fully hypotactic. Because of this prose-like syntax, several morpho-syntactic ties obtain across the unit.⁸³ It begins with the *w^eqatal* verb והיה (*and it will happen*), followed by several verbs that continue the future-perspective of the action: יִקְדֹּשׁ (*he will punish*, v. 21) and a chain of *w^eqatal* and *yiqtol* forms: וְאָסְפוּ (*and he will gather*, v. 22), וְסָגְרוּ (*and they will be shut up*), יִפְקְדוּ (*they will be punished*), וְהִפְרָה (*and it will be abashed*, v. 23), and וְבוֹשָׁה (*and it will be ashamed*). This verb-tense chain does not imply a strict chronological series of actions, but (like the introductory vv. 1–3) it unites the unit aspectually (i.e. imperfective aspect) by placing it in a future time. The only exception is the final, climactic verb, which is *qatal* (מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה, v. 23).

Lexically, there are several strongly cohesive ties within vv. 21–23. First, verbal root פקד creates an inclusio around vv. 21–22, emphasising the finality of YHWH's dealings with competing powers. Contributing to this punishment-inclusio is the repetition of words related to imprisonment (v. 22), including אָסַף (*to gather*), אֲסַפָּה (*prison*), אֲסִיר (*prisoner*), בֹּדֶן (*pit*), סָגַר (*to shut up*), and מִסְגֵּר (*dungeon*).

In addition to the confinement of heavenly and earthly rulers, YHWH's preeminence is portrayed through the darkening of the luminaries, which are anthropomorphised in terms of shame. Both great luminaries, the moon (הַלְבִּנָּה) and the sun (הַחֲמָה), have the definite article; in this case, the definite article is not endophoric (and therefore cohesive) but "homophoric."⁸⁴ If "the hosts of the heights"

⁸³ For present purposes we need not enter the debate about the definition of biblical poetry or the question of a prose/poetry spectrum (cf. the survey in Petersen and Richards, *Interpreting Hebrew Poetry*, 1–19). Because Isa 24:21–23 contains poetic parallelism, it will be treated at poetry.

⁸⁴ Halliday and Hasan use the term "homophoric" to distinguish this use of the definite article from a situational exophoric reference (e.g. "The snow's too deep" refers to the snow in the speaker's

in v. 21 refers to divine or other non-human powers, which seems likely in this context, then this abasement of the two great celestial bodies may be another way to describe YHWH's punishment of these "hosts of the heights."⁸⁵ Because the dimming of the luminaries is associated with theophanic judgment, the imagery in v. 23 may preserve a "mythical expression" of YHWH's defeat of both earthly and supernatural powers.⁸⁶ The motif of darkened heavenly bodies is also part of the terrifying "day of YHWH" vision of Isa 13 (vv. 9–10). The effects of this day are, like the description of Isa 24, worldwide (חבל) yet focused particularly on the prideful (גאון זדים [*majesty of the proud*]; גאות עריצים [*arrogance of the ruthless*], v. 11), and involve drastically thinning out the human population (*rarer than fine gold*, v. 12).

A final cohesive tie within this brief unit—thematically central to the composition—is created by the repetition of terms for polemic effect. The first object of punishment in v. 21 is "hosts (צבא) of the heights," and the second is "kings (מלכים) of the earth." The statement of YHWH's rule (v. 23) takes a term from each side of the merism in its claim that YHWH of hosts (צבאות) reigns (מלך) as king on Mt. Zion.

situation) (*Cohesion*, 71). Within this category of homophoric definiteness, we might call this a "monadic" use of the article, since it refers to something of which there is only one (or one *par excellence*, e.g. *the queen*).

⁸⁵ A more common term is "hosts of heaven [שמים]." Isaiah 24–27 shows a preference for the term מרום instead of the more common שמים. The word מרום has occurred thus far in 24:4, 18. The latter of these replaces the more common "windows of heaven [השמים]" (Gen 7:11). This is a tendency elsewhere in the book of Isaiah: Isa 37:24 reads מרום twice, where its Kings parallel only has the term once (2 Kgs 19:23). In Isaiah, the term מרום is attributed to YHWH alone. A person or nation's claim to מרום for itself is prideful, and is essentially a claim to the place of God himself. Any such attempt is portrayed as both futile and destined for defeat (Isa 22:16 [Shebna]; 37:24 [Sennacherib]; cf. association with pride: Obad 3; Ps 56:3 [2]; 75:6 [5]).

⁸⁶ Eric Nels Ortlund, *Theophany and Chaotikampf: The Interpretation of Theophanic Imagery in the Baal Epic, Isaiah, and the Twelve*, Gorgias Ugaritic Studies 5 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2010), 149–50. An example of the motif in a Canaanite prophetic judgment context is the Deir 'Alla inscription, which contains a message to "cover up the heavens with dense cloud, so that darkness, and no brilliance will be there . . . that you may instill dread" (Combination 1, lines 21–22, 24; trans. Baruch Levine, "The Deir 'Alla Plaster Inscriptions," *JAOS* 101.2 (1981), 197.

3.3. Cohesion in Section 1 (24:1–23)

The announcement of YHWH's cosmic rule constitutes the climax and the conclusion of Section 1. The final question for Section 1 is how its "in that day" unit (24:21–23) relates to the longer preceding unit (24:1–20). As we have seen, the opening unit describes a coming widespread devastation, and the second is a shorter climactic unit which repeats the judgment theme in the context of YHWH's reign. Although YHWH does not appear as an explicit agent in the middle description of judgment—of devastated crops, ruined houses, and abandoned towns—the section is framed by divine action (vv. 1–3; 21–23). The divine name is the subject of this section's first clause (24:1) and last clause (24:23), creating an agency frame around the whole section that highlights YHWH's active role in setting up his reign.

As noted above, vv. 21–23 contain several unique features which distinguish the unit from its literary context. The most obvious is the temporal expression *והיה ביום ההוא* (*it will happen on that day*), a phrase which most explain diachronically as an insertion method for recontextualising or extending the temporal scope of an oracle.⁸⁷ The unit also contains several terms that are unique within Isa 24–27: *צבא* (*hosts in the heights*), *אדמה* (*ground*), *בור* (*pit*), *מסגר* (*dungeon*), *הלבנה* (*the moon*), and *החמה* (*the sun*). Because of these differences, some prefer to read the unit

⁸⁷ See Blenkinsopp, *History of Prophecy*, 233–34. While some have argued for a non-eschatological sense and others a wholly eschatological sense, DeVries's foundational study categorises four of distinct uses: glosses, incorporating statements, transitional formulae, and concluding formulae. He identifies Isa 23:21–23 as an instance of an incorporated statement which has expanded an earlier oracle: "An eschatological poem of the day of Yahweh in vss. 1–20 receives an expansion in the form of a poem of apocalyptic bliss (24:21–23, 25:6–8) predicting Yahweh's universal rule, removing even death, for the sake of his people" (*Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, 305). Such an expansion is "equated in time" with the original oracle, and though perhaps extending the time, is is nonetheless "imminently certain."

Williamson observes the frequent addition of the expression "in that day" in the first part of the book, which by the time of chs. 40ff., is presented as no longer being a future day, but already having arrived (*Book Called Isaiah*, 120).

as an eschatological or apocalyptic appendix which is set in a more distant future than vv. 1–20.⁸⁸ In this case, the deictic marker *והיה ביום ההוא* in the phrase *והיה ביום ההוא* (*it will happen on that day*) functions as a technical term for an eschatological oracle, rather than in the normal referential sense (i.e. *that day* = the day just mentioned or otherwise known from the context). In its present form, vv. 21–23 are presented as a continuation, or perhaps more accurately, a climactic restatement of the preceding announcement of judgment. The day of decisive judgment still lies in the future, indicated by the use of predominately imperfective verbal forms in the introduction (vv. 1–3), summarising statement (v. 13), and climax (vv. 21–23).

While the unit stands out as climactic, there are still several cohesive ties that connect it lexically to the rest of the section. The two units share the term *מרום* (*heights*) and the root *סגר* (*pu'al, to be shut*). Day argues, in addition, that vv. 21–23 are continuous with vv. 18–20 through shared theophanic imagery.⁸⁹ Whether Day is correct in the connection with Baal mythology, the collocation of the windows of heaven opening (24:18), the quaking of earth's foundations (24:18), and the darkening of the luminaries (24:23), highlights a theophanic continuity between the two units.

⁸⁸ Polaski, *Authorizing an End*, 79. Although Polaski believes vv. 21–23 are set in a later time, he points out that they develop the same narrative as vv. 1–20, share ideas like the glory (*כבוד*) of *YHWH*, the rare root *סגר*, which is rare in the *pu'al binyan* (*to be shut*, 24:10, 22), the inclusion of both "heights" and earth in judgment. Even though he finds vv. 21–23 to reflect a more apocalyptic worldview, they nonetheless exhibit an "essential continuity" with the preceding verses (78–9). And although apocalyptic literature is one possible intertextual reading, he notes that the prison motif is found elsewhere in the book of Isaiah in reference to the exile (Isa 42:7).

⁸⁹ Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 146–8. While I do not wish to dispute the polemical overtones of Isa 24–27, this particular scene differs significantly from the Baal imagery, as *YHWH* does not darken the luminaries with cloud or storm, but by the brightness of his own glory (24:23) (cf. Gerhard F. Hasel, "Resurrection in the Theology of Old Testament Apocalyptic," *ZAW* 92.2 [1980], 283–4, who stresses the significance of God's glory for Isa 24–27 and other early "resurrection" texts like Dan 12).

Lastly, there is an important cohesive tie that is less recognised, namely the theme of the kingship of YHWH. The rule of YHWH is the thematic emphasis of vv. 21–23, since the final statement grounds the entire unit in the reign of YHWH (כי מלך יהוה). However, I have argued that 24:1–20 also develops the theme of YHWH as king. The military terminology used in vv. 1–3 depicts him as an invading military force, devastating those who do not bow to his rule (v. 5). Although kingship is not stated explicitly until the end of the section, its thematic development begins at the very beginning with the devastating campaign to deplete the human population and vanquish all other rulers, human and divine, and it culminates with YHWH's reign on Mt. Zion in glory.

4. Section 2 (25:1–5)—Hymn of Praise to the King

יהוה אלהי אתה	¹ YHWH, you are my God;
ארוממך	I will exalt you;
אודה שמך	I will praise your name!
כי עשית פלא	For you have done an amazing thing,
עצות מרחוק אמונה אמן	plans from long ago, dependable and trustworthy.
כי שמת מעיר ⁹⁰ לגל ⁹¹	² For you made the city into a heap,
קריה בצורה למפלה	the fortified city into a pile of ruins.
ארמון זרים מעיר ⁹²	The fortress of foreigners is no longer a city.
לעולם לא יבנה	It will never be rebuilt.

⁹⁰ MT: מַעִיר לְגַל (lit. *from the city to the heap*). The LXX, Vulgate, Peshitta, and Targum do not account for the מן-prefix (e.g. ὁδοῦ ἑθνητικῆς πόλεως εἰς χῶμα). One solution is to transpose the *mēm* to the end of the word, making it plural ערים, but better to simply delete the *mēm* as a scribal error of assimilation to the same word in v. 2b. This does not affect the sense (cf. J. A. Emerton, "A Textual Problem in Isaiah 25:2," *ZAW* 89.1 [1977], 67; Arie van der Kooij, "Isaiah 24–27: Text-Critical Notes," in *Studies in Isaiah 24–27*, 13).

⁹¹ BHS suggests repointing MT לְגַל to לָגַל, the typical spelling of the word. However, the pausal form (*zaqep parvum*) can take a lengthened vowel *qāmeš* (cf. Gen 31:46).

⁹² Emerton proposes emending this second occurrence of מַעִיר (MT) to מָעֵר (*destroyed*), a *hop'al* participle of ערר ("Textual Problem in Isaiah 25:2," 72). Though this proposal fits the context nicely, the prep. מן functions as a privative in similar statements:

הנה דמשק מוסר מעיר	Look, Damascus will no longer be a city [lit. will be turned aside from a city] (Isa 17:1)
לכו ונכריתנה מגוי	Come, let us cut off [Moab] from being a nation [lit. from a nation] (Jer 48:2)

על כן יכבדוך עם עז	³ Therefore, a strong people will glorify you,
קרית גוים עריצים ייראוך	a city of ruthless nations will fear you.
כי היית מעוז לדל	⁴ For you are a place of protection for the poor,
מעוז לאביון בצר לו	a place of protection for the needy in their distress,
מחסה מזרם צל מחרב	a shelter from the storm, a shade from the heat
כי רוח עריצים כזרם קיר	(For the breath of the ruthless is like a storm
כחרב בציון ⁹³	[against] a wall, ⁵ like heat in a dry place).
שאון זרים תכניע	The noise of foreigners you will subdue.
חרב בצל עב	[Like] heat [is put down] by the shade of a cloud,
זמיר עריצים יענה	the song of the ruthless will be put down.

This lyrical piece, which asyndetically follows the prophetic judgment announcement of 24:1–23, sounds like a passage from the psalter. Compare, for example, these two hymnic verses which use the same verbs and psalmic expressions:

אלי אתה ואודך	You are my God, and I will praise you,
אלהי ארוממך	My God, and I will exalt you!
- - -	(Ps 118:28)
זה אלי ואנוהו	This is my God, and I will glorify him,
אלהי אבי וארממנהו	the God of my father, and I will exalt him!
	(Exod 15:2)

With the possible exception of vv. 4d–5, a parenthetical explanation of the preceding metaphor, the song of 25:1–5 is generally considered a unified hymn of praise.

The hymn consists of an opening tri-fold pronouncement of praise to YHWH (v. 1), followed by the grounds for this praise (cf. two causal כי-clauses in vv. 1–2). The conjunctive particle כי has, of course, a large range of functions, which must be

⁹³ This parenthetical statement (vv. 4d–5a) is variously punctuated. William Irwin notes the "considerable disarray" of the Greek text, suggesting uncertainty early on in the transmission process. He follows the MT punctuation and proposes that the clause, כי רוח עריצים כזרם קיר, should be read as the first member of a triplet:

*For the blast of barbarians like a storm of Kir;
Like heat in the desert the uproar of foreigners you subdue;
As heat in a cloud's shade, the song of barbarians subsides.*

("The Punctuation of Isaiah 24:14–16a and 25:4c–5," *CBQ* 46.2 [1984], 219). This proposal construes רוח (along with שאון) as the objects of the vb. תכניע (as well as rendering קיר as a proper noun), a reading that requires suspending the verb for what would more naturally be read as a verbless clause. Therefore, the punctuation of BHS is preferable.

contextually specified.⁹⁴ The first ground for praise is YHWH's accomplishment of a marvellous thing (פלא). The second ground, epexegetical to the first, is his destruction of an (again) unnamed city. This second ground is followed by its result (על כן), namely enemy nations giving obeisance to YHWH. A third כי-clause modifies this result, giving a reason for enemy reverence based on YHWH's care for the disadvantaged, which is elaborated with a nature metaphor and closed by a reiteration of YHWH's humbling of the enemy.⁹⁵

As might be expected for a psalm, the speech is directed consistently toward YHWH using the second person. The first word of the hymn is the vocative יהוה (v. 1), and the direct address continues throughout. The second person forms include the independent pronoun (אתה, *you*, v. 1), pronominal suffixes (אֶרְוֹמְךָ, *I will praise you*, v. 1; שְׁמֶךָ, *your name*, v. 1; יִכְבְּדוּךָ, *they will glorify you*, v. 3; יִירָאוּךָ, *they will fear you*, v. 3), and verbal inflections (עָשִׂיתָ, *you have done*, v. 1; שָׁמַתָּ, *you have made*, v. 2; הִיִּיתָ, *you are*, v. 4; תִּכְנִיעַ, *you subdue*, v. 5). This consistency in direct address is coupled with the first person perspective of the speaker: אֱלֹהֵי, *my God*, אֶרְוֹמְךָ, *I will exalt you*, and אֹדְדָה, *I will praise* (v. 1), again reflecting traditional psalmic style.⁹⁶ The shift to *yiqtol* verbal forms in v. 5 is typical for psalms as well, which can use

⁹⁴ Hosch, "A Textlinguistic Analysis of Isaiah 25," *HS* 47 (2006), 52.

⁹⁵ Pace Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, who reads all three כי-clauses as the "bases for the initial call to praise," and the final one as a "specific basis for the initial praise" (334).

⁹⁶ In Halliday and Hasan's analysis, first and second person pronouns (which constitute "speech roles" in a discourse) generally do not contribute to literary cohesion, since as participants in the speech situation, they refer to entities external to the text, i.e. to the speaker or the intended addressee of the utterance, not to inner-textual relationships (*Cohesion*, 48). However, in some cases such as quoted speech, first and second person pronominal forms can function with anaphoric (and therefore cohesive) reference. This hymn is just such a case: because the text identifies the referent (and intended addressee) of the second-person forms, namely YHWH, this identification allows the second person forms to tie back to the opening vocative address. These ties contribute to cohesion since each personal reference provides a link with a preceding part of the text. Since every occurrence of the second person has the same referent (YHWH), these are instances of referential cohesion.

verb "tense" for stylistic purposes such as poetic parallel, or in this case to mark the end of the poem as a "poetic boundary device."⁹⁷

Another cohesion characteristic of the hymn is its psalmic vocabulary.⁹⁸ Besides indicating genre, these distinctly psalmic terms provide lexical cohesion through collocating words that are commonly found in the same literary environment. These associated words include the verbs *רום* (*to exult*)⁹⁹ and *ידה*¹⁰⁰ (*to praise, give thanks*, v. 1), as well as the nouns (and substantival adjectives) *פלא* (*wonder*, v. 1), *מעוז* (*stronghold*, v. 4), *דל* (*poor*, v. 4), and *אביון* (*needy*, v. 4). The noun *פלא*, to which we will return below, is of special interest. The accomplishment of this "wonder" is cited as the basis for praise, which is then identified more specifically as the destruction of an enemy city (v. 2).¹⁰¹ Given the tendency of these

⁹⁷ Randall Buth, "The Taxonomy and Function of Hebrew Tense-Shifting in the Psalms," *START* 15 (1986), 31.

⁹⁸ Given this clustered psalmic vocabulary, Hibbard explores possible instances of literary allusion, though he admits that such identifications are especially uncertain in this case given the uncertainty of dating the psalms and the generic nature of the language in the psalms (*Intertextuality*, 95). Surprisingly, his analysis does not consider any possible relationship between this hymn and the Song of the Sea (Exod 15). These songs share common literary situation, i.e. following an account (narrative or prophetic) of YHWH's victory over enemy powers. More specifically, they share vocabulary and close thematic ties. For example, Exod 15:2b reads: This is my God [אלי], and I will praise him, the God of my father, and I will exalt [רום] him. Similarly, Isa 25:1 opens with "YHWH, you are my God [אלהי], I will exalt [רום] you, I will praise your name." Another lexical connection between this hymn and the Song of the Sea is the noun *פלא* (Exod 15:11; Isa 25:1).

⁹⁹ Note the hymnic context of many of the *poel* occurrences of *רום*—Exod 15:2 (Song of the Sea); 1 Sam 2:7 (Hannah's Prayer); 2 Sam 22:49 (Davidic song of deliverance); Isa 25:1; Ps 30:2 [Eng 1]; 34:4 [Eng 3]; 99:5, 9; 107:32; 118:28; 145:1. Unlike the following vb. *ידה*, the root *רום* occurs frequently in a "non-theological" sense; occurrences without deity as the object include Isa 1:2; 23:4; Ezek 31:4; Hos 11:7; Ps 9:14 [Eng 13]; 18:49 [Eng 48]; 27:5; Ps 37:34; 107:25; 118:16; Job 17:4; Prov 4:8; 14:34; Ezra 9:9.

¹⁰⁰ The verb *ידה* occurs 100x in the *hiph.* (twice in Aram. *ha.*), occurring some 67 times in the psalms (all in *hiph.*), almost always with reference to God as the grammatical or conceptual object. It occurs less frequently outside the psalter, including the Davidic song of deliverance above that also includes *רום* (in 2Sam 22:50). The verb is used twice in Isa 12 (vv. 1, 4), the closest inner-Isaiah parallel to Isa 25:1–5. This pattern of *ידה* as joyous reaction to an experience is common (e.g. Ps 28:7; Isa 12:1; *TLOT* 2:504).

¹⁰¹ Although drawing extensively from psalmic language, this hymn also contains several terms that tie it to other texts in Isaiah. So, for instance, the concept of the trustworthiness of YHWH is expressed in "words from the very heart of Isaiah's prophetic message" (see 1:21, 26; 7:9; 30:15) (John Sawyer, *Isaiah*, vol. 1, DSB [Edinburgh: Saint Andrew: 1984], 205).

words to cooccur in the same psalmic lexical environment, they have a cohesive effect on the overall textual unit.

Lastly, the hymn coheres in its concern to characterise two opposing attitudes towards YHWH. The thematic contrast is between the destruction of the ruthless enemy and the protection of the needy poor—both of which are expressions of YHWH's power. The hymn celebrates, for example, the ruin of the palace of foreigners (זרם, v. 2) along with the silencing of their exultant noise (v. 5). Other terms used for the defeated enemy include: עיר (city) קריה בצורה (*fortified city*), עם עז (*strong people*), and קרית גוים עריצים (*city of ruthless nations*).¹⁰² Rather than identifying the nation or people group, the important identifying element is the respective attitudes of the paradigmatic enemy, on the one hand, and the paradigmatic faithful worshiper, on the other. These features of the hymn—namely its consistent use of second person forms with reference to YHWH, its psalmic vocabulary, its metaphorical picture of YHWH as destroyer of the ruthless and protector of the poor, and its theme of YHWH's victory—create a well-structured hymn of praise.

5. Cohesion in Movement 1—Isaiah 24:1–25:5

Finally, we turn to the cohesive ties that span the whole of Movement 1. The literary integrity of Isa 24:1–25:5 is a matter of remarkable disagreement, especially given its variety of content and literary form. While some regard the hymn at 25:1–5 as "fitting nicely into its context,"¹⁰³ others find it so unrelated to its context that it

¹⁰² Some commentators take the "strong people" of 25:3 as the Judean audience of the song (Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 334). However, notice how the "strong people" is paralleled with the "city of ruthless nations" and is therefore better taken as referring to the enemy. Their associated verbs are roughly synonymous: יכבדוך and ייראוך (*they will honour and fear you*) (cf. Ps 22:24 [23]; 86:11–12).

¹⁰³ Hays and Irvine, *Eighth-Century Prophet*, 304. Clements mentions the "heavily stereotyped"

"need not be referred to in interpreting the eschatological narrative, which forms the central portion of these chapters."¹⁰⁴ Why does a hymn occur after a prophetic announcement, without so much as a brief introduction? Must the reader appeal to a "flight of the author's imagination" as the only explanation for the hymn?¹⁰⁵

To begin, both sections mention the fallen city (24:10 and 25:2), a topic which constitutes a clear lexical tie between the announcement of judgment and the hymnic response. In ch. 24, the prophetic voice announces the destruction of the city as one representative object of YHWH's judgment. Recall that the description also used the terms קריה (cf. 24:10), עיר (cf. 24:12), as well as associated "urban" words such as בית (cf. 24:10) and שער (cf. 24:12). Using these same two terms for the city, the hymn picks up on its destruction, this time giving special attention to its status as a ruthless, foreign city.¹⁰⁶ More precisely, the grounds for praise is YHWH's actions to turn the

language of 25:1–5, yet maintains the unlikelihood that the hymn was ever an independent unit, since "there are a number of pointers to indicate that the language has been made applicable to its specific setting and function here" (*Isaiah 1–39*, 206–7). Similarly, Blenkinsopp points out the use of "Isaian language" in 25:1–5, which suggests the song was composed for the present context (*Isaiah 1–39*, 363). He notes specifically the plan/counsel of YHWH (9:5; 10:5–19; 14:24–27), the picture of YHWH as refuge and shelter (4:6; 32:1–2), and the language used for enemy forces and their defeat (5:14; 13:11; 17:1; 23:13).

¹⁰⁴ Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 71. He also includes the song of 26:1–6. The possibility of prior independence is often discussed in the literature, and the crux is encapsulated in Lohmann's statement: "Darüber, dass 25.1–5 eine literarische Einheit bilden, herrscht nur eine Meinung. Sind doch von diesem Stücke—eben seiner Selbständigkeit wegen—die Zweifel an der Einheitlichkeit von Jes. 24–27 ausgegangen" ("Lyrischen Abschnitte," 16). Duhm also considered 25:1–5 an insertion with little relationship to its apocalyptic *Urtext*. He suggested the hymn began as a marginal note. Given his quest to identify the earlier portions of the text, he advocates removing these "fremden Bestandteile [foreign portions]" (*Jesaia*, 150).

¹⁰⁵ Skinner, *Prophet Isaiah*, 203.

¹⁰⁶ A few scholars argue that the identity of the city is different between ch. 24 and ch. 25. Johnson argues at length that the city of ch. 24 is Jerusalem, whereas the city of 25:1–5 is Babylon (*Chaos*, 59–60). To support this case, he notes the following contrasts between the two passages: 1) ch. 24 uses terms of lament, whereas 25:1–5 conveys a jubilant mood, each appropriate for the fall of Jerusalem and Babylon, respectively; 2) the destruction of the first city results in chaos, whereas the destruction of the second results in highly positive effects such as the nations' turn to YHWH and care for the poor – in short, a reversal of chaos into order. "For the Jewish mind," Johnson concludes, "the destruction of Jerusalem alone could lead to a collapse into chaos, while only the destruction of Babylon could initiate the new eschatological age." Though this argument appears cogent at first glance, it is not ultimately convincing. While Johnson's conclusion is, in theory, possible given the ubiquity of the theme of the punishment of Jerusalem in the book of Isaiah, it cannot be sustained in

city (עיר) into a heap, and in poetic parallel, the fortified city (קריה בצורה) into a pile of ruins (25:2a; also v. 2b). Like ch. 24, the hymn does not identify the city geographically, but instead identifies its quality of ruthlessness.

The *qatal* verbs of the hymn contrast with the future-oriented verbal forms which frame 24:1–23. Moreover, they suggest actions in the past, as if the speaker is celebrating an already-fallen city, whereas the prophetic announcement looks into the future (cf. the future-oriented frame, 24:1–3, 13, 21–23). For this reason, Doyle holds that "chapter 25 takes up elements of the preceding chapter as a sort of memory."¹⁰⁷ However, it is preferable to read the *qatal* verbs as gnomic in orientation, more like their function in the psalms. As such, "the *qatal* verb is not exploiting a particular event but represents the prophet's perception of all such discreet events within the plan from of old" without reference to any particular historical experience.¹⁰⁸

A related set of terms contributes to the theme of the city's destruction, namely those words which make up the noise-silencing motif. Chapter 24 states this in several ways, including the quieting of musical instruments (25:8) and the songs of merry-makers (24:9; *they do not drink wine with song* [בשיר]). Similarly, the hymn ends with the subduing of enemy noise and song—25:5 "You subdue the noise (שאון) of foreigners . . . the song (זמיר) of ruthless people you lower." These connections are looser than lexical repetition, but they are related lexemes that tie the hymn of praise back to the announcement of judgment by the shared motif of the silencing of exultant noises.

the context of Isaiah 24.

¹⁰⁷ Doyle, *Metaphorically Speaking*, 222.

¹⁰⁸ Hosch, "Textlinguistic Analysis," 52. Cf. Waltke and O'Connor, *Syntax*, 30.5.1d; and Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 17.

Secondly, the psalm is addressed to YHWH, the focal and active agent in the prophetic announcement of 24:1–21. Despite this continuity of referent, the communication situation shifts at 25:1 from the third-person discourse about YHWH to second-person address to YHWH. As mentioned above, YHWH as active agent bookends the announcement of judgment (v. 1 "Behold, YHWH will empty the earth" and v. 21, "YHWH will punish the hosts of the heights" and v. 23 "YHWH of hosts reigns on Mt. Zion"). The announcement of YHWH's judgment of the earth and his victory over heavenly and earthly rulers (24:1–22) to reign in glory (24:23) is therefore followed by psalmic praise to him, which in turn coheres referentially by its use of second person forms. This is consistent with what might be expected in a narrative description of YHWH's action, followed by a poetic unit.

The word פֶּלֶא (*marvel, awesome deed*) helps to signal this response. The grounding for the pronouncement of praise (25:1), expressed by a series of כִּי clauses, begins with the exclamation that "You have performed an awesome deed (פֶּלֶא)," augmented by the description "plans from long ago, faithful and true." At this point, it is reasonable to ask to what the term פֶּלֶא refers within its textual world. The noun פֶּלֶא itself is typically found in the psalms, associated with divine salvific acts in history, of which the exodus narrative is the paradigmatic example (cf. Song of the Sea, Exod 15:11).¹⁰⁹ It is noteworthy that the word (and related מִפְּלֵאָה) is not found in the narrative accounts of these acts, but rather in the non-narrative and emotive retellings of these prose accounts.¹¹⁰ To explain this conventional usage, it is likely that

¹⁰⁹ Besides its use in the Song of the Sea, the noun פֶּלֶא occurs at Ps 77:12 [11], 15 [14]; 78:12; 88:11 [10], 13 [12]; 89:6 [5]; 119:129; Lam 1:9 [pl. acting adverbially]; and Dan 12:6. The noun is found only three times in the prophets, all in Isaiah: Isa 9:5 (coupled with the root יַעַץ as in Isa 25:1 and 28:29); 25:1; and 29:14.

¹¹⁰ There are a few exceptions, including Exod 3:20; 34:10 (both *nip'al* verbs); Josh 3:5; Josh 3:5 (both *nip'al* substantival participles); Judg 13:19 (participle, as part of divine epithet); and Jer 21:2.

the term פלא has less to do with the factuality of a specific narrated event, and more to do with the subjective experience of that event, i.e. being amazed.¹¹¹ In terms of cohesion, the textual environment in which the term פלא is habitually found is within hymnic/psalmic contexts. Given this normal usage of the word, the use in Isa 25 would suggest that term פלא in 25:1 signals an emotive response to a divine action in the immediate context, which is precisely what we find. Just preceding the hymn is the prophetic announcement of a powerful divine act, namely the totality of the events announced in 24:1–23. In this situation, verbal repetition would not be expected, since the term is used as expression of a subjective response to the reported event, not of the event itself. The close association of the term פלא with the victory of YHWH, along with the juxtaposition of the two units, suggests a reading which interprets the hymn as a direct, emotive response to the prophetic announcement.

Lastly, I would like to briefly address an integrative detail of the hymn which is rarely noticed, namely its eschatological echoes. Many scholars find that a major disjunction between the lyrics of Isa 24–27 and the prophetic sections is the lack of eschatological perspective in the lyrics. So Redditt states that the prior history of the songs is "proved by their lack of any inherent eschatological meaning, in contrast with the wholly eschatological significance they take on in the chapters as they now stand."¹¹² This is a reasonable observation, although there may be more

Poetic occurrences of the verb: 2 Sam 1:26; Isa 28:29; 29:14; Joel 2:26; Mic 7:15; Zech 8:6; some 30x in the psalms; 6x in Job; 1 Chr 16:9, 12, 24.

¹¹¹ Paul Kruger, *NIDOTTE* 3:616. R. Albertz concurs: "The referent of *pele'* is not God's act of deliverance as such, the immediate act of deliverance, but one's astonished reaction to God's unexpected intervention in one's hopeless situation of distress" and, more generally, to the inscrutability of the divine will (*TLOT* 2:984, 985).

¹¹² Paul Redditt, "Once Again, the City in Isaiah 24–27," *HAR* 10 (1986), 317. Redditt posits a pre-existence for the songs, and explores their possible origins apart from the book of Isaiah. Although Redditt admits the speculative nature of his argument (318), I find its "anthropological" approach to be misguided in its assumption that the songs express an anti-urban, pro-peasant sentiment (which relies on alleged parallels in feudal societies). Moreover, this view fails to adequately explain the

"eschatological significance" in the songs of Isa 24–27 than Redditt realises. The songs, in fact, contain imagery from elsewhere in the book, in decidedly eschatological contexts. For example, the hymn in question speaks of YHWH as a *shelter from the storm* (מחסה מזרם) and a *shade from the heat* (צל מחרב) (25:4), which are the same terms used in the eschatological oracle of Isa 4:6—

On that day (4:2) . . . There will be a booth for *shade* (צל) by day *from the heat* (מחרב), and for a *shelter* (מחסה) and a refuge *from the storm* (מזרם) and rain.

The second hymn of Isa 24–27 (26:1–6), not counting its prose introduction, similarly alludes to an eschatological oracle earlier in the book. Its singers exclaim, "Open the gates, so that the *righteous nation* (גוי צדיק) can enter, the one that keep *faithfulness* (שמר אמונים)!" echoing the paired terms from the lament and oracle of salvation in ch. 1—

How the *faithful* city (קריה נאמנה), who was full of justice, has become a prostitute. *Righteousness* (צדק) lodged within her, but now, murderers! (Isa 1:21)

Afterwards (אחרי כן), you will be called the city of *righteousness* (עיר הצדק), the *faithful* city (קריה נאמנה). (Isa 1:26b)

So while the hymns of 25:1–5 and 26:1–6 are not obviously eschatological, they nonetheless echo language from other texts in Isaiah which are eschatological. The assumption of coherency requires the reader to interpret the fallen city of the hymn as the fallen city of the prophetic announcement.¹¹³ And the celebration of this mighty act of God contributes to the central theme of the victory of YHWH as king. Granting the otherwise loose cohesion between the hymn and its prophetic prelude,

songs' positive reference to the "strong city" (Isa 26:1), as well as to the reference to foreignness as the real object of antagonism (e.g. the terms זרים and גוים in 25:1–5).

¹¹³ Recall the discourse presupposition that text users will assume coherence and will interpret a discourse accordingly, apart from authorial or editorial intention.

the theme of YHWH's victorious reign is central to the whole movement, announced in 24:1–23 and praised in 25:1–5.¹¹⁴

6. Degrees of Cohesion

At this point, it is important to reiterate that literary cohesion cannot be marked merely as present or absent in a discourse, but is present in varying degrees. Halliday and Hasan provide an illustration of a song embedded in a non-lyrical setting. The example from modern fiction (*Alice in Wonderland*) illustrates how even a small degree of cohesion can be part of a dynamic and coherent literary work which incorporates multiple sub-genres:

'The piece I am going to repeat,' [Humpty Dumpty] went on without noticing her remark, 'was written entirely for your amusement.'
Alice felt that in that case she really *ought* to listen to it, so she sat down, and said, 'Thank you' rather sadly.
'In winter when the fields are white,
I sing this song for your delight— . . .'

In this excerpt, there is little measurable cohesion between the quoted song (lines 5–6) and its narrative setting (lines 1–4). Yet even in the wild world of *Alice*, there is sufficient cohesion to allow for a coherent reading of the song within its larger narrative framework. This includes the tie between *song* and *piece*. The important point here is that "textuality is not a matter of all or nothing, of dense clusters of cohesive ties or else none at all."¹¹⁵ To the contrary, it is normal for levels of cohesion

¹¹⁴ I find the speculative discussions of a sociological background for the hymns of Isa 24–27 to be misguided. Given a particular social situation, one could explain certain hymnic features in light of such a situation, the but features of the hymn itself to do not betray any certain social situation. For an especially tenuous example, see Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 96, which suggests that the author of Isa 25:1–5 "is not someone connected with the priesthood or particularly concerned with the Temple." This postulation is based on a limited lexical overlap between Isa 25:1–5 and Ps 118, but without any overlap of the "Temple issues" of Ps 118 (vv. 19, 20, 22, 26, 27). Hibbard grants that this proposal cannot be proven, but the point remains that such speculations about the background of the psalm are conjectural.

¹¹⁵ Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion*, 296.

to vary within texts, and this is one means of creating interest and dynamism in a literary work, whether ancient or modern.

This quality of literary discourse, namely varying degrees of cohesion, is one element to be sensitive to when considering the distance between ancient literary texts and modern Western texts. At the least, we should be aware that what constitutes a meaningful level (and type) of cohesion may vary depending on time, place, and language. Others have made a similar observation about literary genre, since "the conventions which make up genres are always historically fluid."¹¹⁶ Such a genre may entail the inclusion of psalms in narrative, perhaps without advancing the story's plot, for purposes relating to structure, thematic and theological development, and the actualisation of the narrative by inviting reader participation in the song. Modern narrative does not typically feature imbedded hymns and therefore we have few models for comparison regarding their purpose and function within the narrative.¹¹⁷

Back to Isaiah, I suggest that the hymn of 25:1–5 is an analogous example of this "lower" cohesive phenomenon, but instead of being embedded in prose narrative, it is embedded in a prophetic oracle. And as with many embedded sub-genres, the shift in genre necessarily entails a lesser degree of cohesion. There is relatively little cohesion between 25:1–5 and 24:1–23, but this does not require reading the hymn as a true "interruption" as some have argued. Just as poems within biblical narrative have functions besides advancing the plot, lyrics can function in biblical prophecy in ways besides advancing the prophetic vision. The hymn of praise in 25:1–5 invites

¹¹⁶ James W. Watts, *Psalm and Story: Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative*, JSOTSup 139 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 197.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 206.

its hearers/readers to adopt the perspective of the speaker and to participate in the expression of praise and confidence in the divine plan behind volatile circumstances. In doing so, they are actualised as the "needy" who are saved by YHWH, enacting the attitude toward him and his reign that the composition advocates.

CHAPTER 5

MOVEMENT 2 (ISAIAH 25:6–26:21), PART 1

1. Introduction

The prophetic visions of the future often paint pictures of remarkable discontinuity with the existing world order, utopian/dystopian scenes that go beyond the scope of human experience and into the realm of the imagination.¹ However idyllic, these utopian ideals, like a lion at peace with young cattle (Isa 11:6), express very real hopes. The very imagining of an ideal world says something about the very real present and implies an "ideological rejection of present conditions."² This second movement of Isa 24–27 (25:6–26:21) begins with one such idealised depiction of the future reign of YHWH and its commentary of society. At the locus of his rule, YHWH will host a banquet *par excellence*, at which will sit not just the heavenly council, nor his elders, nor even Israel, but all nations. And, in a grand reversal of the ancient Near Eastern trope "Death the devourer," at this banquet Death is devoured and tears are wiped away.

Equally vivid within the prophet literature, however, are the descriptions of dystopia, whether for Israel's enemies or for Israel herself. The literary world of Isa 25:6–26:21 is one of clashing eschatological fates, which envisions restoration for the faithful and defeat for the insubordinate. But it is also one which gives voice to

¹ The degree of (dis)continuity between present and future in prophetic eschatology is a question of its own. The issue is particularly pronounced in (proto-)apocalyptic texts. Some differentiate between utopian prophetic passages, which though speaking of the distant future, remain tied to mundane life, and proto-apocalyptic texts, which speak of an imminent cosmic upheaval (Cook, "Apocalyptic Prophecy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014], 23).

² Ehud Ben Zvi, "Utopias, Multiple Utopias, and Why Utopias at All? The Social Roles of Utopian Visions in Prophetic Books within Their Historical Context," in *Utopia and Dystopia in Prophetic Literature*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi (Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, 2006), 59.

the suffering, expressing the grief of lament and the hope of the announced restoration.

2. Structure and Genre

Movement 2 has three major sections: 25:6–12; 26:1–6; and 26:7–21. These sections follow the general macrostructural pattern already encountered in 24:1–25:5: prophetic *announcement* (25:6–12) followed by a *response*, in this case two responses (26:1–6, 7–21). Due to the length of this movement, it will be addressed in two chapters.

Movement 2—Isa 25:6–26:21

Section 1—YHWH's Banquet on Mt. Zion (25:6–12)	Announcement
Unit 1 (25:6–10a)	
Unit 2 (25:10b–12)	
Section 2—Hymn of Trust (26:1–6)	Response (Future)
Section 3—Prayer of Trust (26:7–21)	Response (Present)
Unit 1 (26:7–10)	
Unit 2 (26:11–19)	
Unit 3 (26:20–21)	

As with Movement 1, these section boundaries follow shifts in genre, in the first place from hymn to prophecy (25:6), and in the second, back to hymn (26:1). This hymn (26:1–6) is placed in the mouths of the eschatological worshipers on Mt. Zion, and is variously labeled a *hymn*,³ *thanksgiving song/Danklied*,⁴ or *song of trust*,⁵ without strictly fitting with any form-critical category.⁶ It is formally similar to 25:1–

³ Hermann Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, trans. James D. Nogalski (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 22.

⁴ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 360.

⁵ Johnson, *Chaos*, 68.

⁶ Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 123.

5, including its psalmic language, but is communal rather than individual. The third section of the movement (26:7–21) will be discussed further in the next chapter.

3. Section 1 (25:6–12)—YHWH's Banquet on Mt. Zion

3.1. Unit 1 (25:6–10a)

ועשה יהוה צבאות	⁶ And YHWH of hosts will prepare
לכל העמים בהר הזה	for all peoples on this mountain
משתה שמנים	a feast of rich foods,
משתה שמרים	a feast of aged wines,
שמנים ממחים	rich foods flavoured with marrow,
שמרים מזקקים	aged and refined wines.
ובלע בהר הזה	⁷ And he will devour on this mountain
פני הלוט הלוט על כל העמים	the face of the cover that covers all peoples,
והמסכה הנסוכה על כל הגוים	the cloth that is spread over all the nations.
בלע ⁷ המות לנצח	⁸ He will devour death forever.
ומחה אדני יהוה דמעה	And YHWH the Lord will wipe away the tears
מעל כל פנים	from all faces.
וחרפת עמו יסיר מעל כל הארץ	And the reproach of his people he will turn away
	from the whole earth.
כי יהוה דבר	For YHWH has spoken.
ואמר ⁸ ביום ההוא	⁹ And it will be said on that day:
הנה אלהינו זה	"Look, this is our God!
קוינו לו ויושיענו	We have waited on him, and he saved us.
זה יהוה קוינו לו	This is YHWH! We have waited on him.
נגילה ונשמחה בישועתו	We shall be glad and rejoice in his salvation!"
כי תנוח יד יהוה בהר הזה	¹⁰ For the hand of YHWH will rest on this mountain.

The first unit (vv. 6–10a) describes in dramatic fashion YHWH's activity on *this mountain* (= הר ציון; cf. 24:23). The locative phrase בהר הזה (*on this mountain*) in vv.

⁷ The lack of copula stands out here (MT, 1QIsa^a, LXX, Theodotion, Symmachus, the Targum and Vulgate). Only a few late Heb. manuscripts, Peshier, and Syriac add a *wāw* (cf. Van der Kooij, "Text-Critical Notes," 14). This has prompted some to identify the entire clause בלע המות לנצח as later explanatory gloss (Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 208–9). Others maintain that the *wāw* is the original reading (Johnson, *Chaos*, 64; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 358), but it is difficult to explain its drop. See below for further discussion.

⁸ The person and number of this verb are variable in the textual traditions. While the MT and 4QIsa^c have 3ms, 1QIsa^a reads 2s (ואמרת) along with Syriac; LXX reads 3pl (Van der Kooij, "Text-Critical Notes," 14). The second person may be a harmonisation with a similar introduction in Isa 12:1 [2s] and 12:4 [2pl]. Since the precise referent of this speech verb is not clear, regardless of its person and number, it is best to render it indefinitely as "it will be said" or "one will say" (cf. Hosch, "Textlinguistic Analysis," 60).

6 and 10 uses deictic reference to create an inclusion around the unit, which emphasises the spatial height of YHWH's eschatological reign. The unit coheres in large part through its high concentration of words in the semantic domain of feasting, with YHWH as host. Its opening statement (וַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לְכָל הָעַמִּים . . . מִשְׁתָּה; v. 6) follows a formulaic pattern in literary depictions of feasts: X (subject) + עֲשֶׂה (verb) + Y-ל (indirect object) + מִשְׁתָּה (direct object) (cf. Gen 19:3; 26:30; 40:20).⁹

This banquet setting is further described using a variety of terms related to feasting, including מִשְׁתָּה (*banquet*, 2x), שְׂמִנִּים (*rich foods*, 2x), שְׂמֵרִים (*wines*, 2x), מִמְחִים (*flavoured with marrow*), מְזֻקָּקִים (*refined*),¹⁰ and בִּלְע (*devour*, 2x). Continuing the composition's tendency for word-play, these terms are alliterative and exhibit "stair step parallelism":¹¹

מִשְׁתָּה שְׂמִנִּים	(A) a feast of rich foods,
מִשְׁתָּה שְׂמֵרִים	(B) a feast of aged wines,
שְׂמִנִּים מִמְחִים	(A') of rich foods flavoured with marrow,
שְׂמֵרִים מְזֻקָּקִים	(B') of aged and refined wines.

This piling up of words for decadent food and drink, "language of excess," adds to the sense of overwhelming superabundance and, like 24:1–23, highlights the active agency of YHWH alone.¹²

⁹ Paul Cho and Janling Fu, "Death and Feasting in the Isaiah Apocalypse (Isaiah 25:6–8)," in *Formation*, 136. They suggest further that the normal expectation of banquet etiquette is overturned; whereas typically the host was expected to protect the guests, this does not seem to be the case in Isa 25. If some of the nations present at the meal were hostile to Israel, then YHWH will swallow some of those guests present. While this reading is possible, it does not appear that *Mot* was an invited guest to this meal. The unexpected turn is rather that *Mot's* insatiable appetite has finally met its match in YHWH.

¹⁰ See Barker, *Isaiah's Kingship Polemic*, 77–84, for an extended discussion of the nature of these feasting terms.

¹¹ Ibid., 72. In Millar's words, "the poetry of the bicola [v. 6] could hardly be more beautifully constructed. The rhyme, the assonance and the climactic parallelism are superb" (*Origin of Apocalyptic*, 41).

¹² Polaski, *Authorising an End*, 167.

The exaggerated language is strengthened by another type of lexical cohesion, namely the repeated word כל. The term occurs five times within just three verses and reinforces the inclusive scope of the banquet: על כל העמים (v. 6), לכל העמים (v. 7), על כל הגוים (v. 7), מעל כל פנים (v.8), and מעל כל הארץ (v. 8). Its repetition is rhetorically striking in that *all* nations are invited to the centre of YHWH's rule to receive the benefits of Israel's divine host.

The only exception to the verbal mainline in 25:6–8 is what appears to be a missing *wāw* (i.e. an asyndetic clause) in v. 8: בלע המות לנצח (*he will devour death forever*). *Mot*'s striking (dis)appearance here at the feast lacks the typical connective *wāw*, which, along with the suspicion of a late theological idea, has led some to explain the clause as a scribal gloss. The historical-theological question notwithstanding, note the structure of the metaphorical statement:

		ובלע בהר הזה	7And he will devour on that mountain
על כל העמים	הלוט פני הלוט		the face of the cover that covers all peoples,
על כל הגוים	הנסוכה והמסכה		the cloth that is spread over all the nations.
	לנצח בלע המות	8He will devour death forever.	

The syntax of v. 7 is clear enough, as it consists of the main verb (ובלע), an adverbial locative phrase (בהר הזה), and two direct objects (פני הלוט and והמסכה) with their modifiers. The second of these objects is connected with an epexegetical *wāw* in parallel structure. The clause in question (v. 8a) asyndetically restates the main verb (including its 3ms inflexion) and provides a third direct object (המות) and adverbial modifier (לנצח). This clause is a clausal appositive construction, i.e. "two or more clauses in juxtaposition (no conjunction)," which can restate (e.g. Gen 4:23), emphatically repeat (e.g. Gen 37:33), and explain (e.g. Gen 15:15).¹³ This last,

¹³ Francis Andersen, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Mouton, 1974), 36, 37–47. The term *apposition* is more often used for substantives with an identical (or closely-related) referent (cf. Waltke and O'Connor, *Syntax*, 659). Andersen distinguishes between clausal apposition and

explanatory function may present "material which is not necessarily implicit in the lead clause."¹⁴ As it appears in 25:7–8, v. 8a functions as an explanation of the metaphor that precedes, without which the metaphor would remain unexplained. The result is that death is metaphorically pictured as a cloth, perhaps a mourning garment or shroud, that covers all humankind.¹⁵ Besides the expected omission of any conjunction in an appositional phrase, it is not surprising to see marked syntax that draws attention to a climactic line of the text.¹⁶ In summary, the marked syntax signals an explanation of the metaphor.

There is some debate regarding the type of feast in view in 25:6–8, and given the brevity of the passage and ubiquity of ceremonial meals in ancient texts and

"conjunctionless juxtaposition." The latter can be used, for example, in reported vernacular speech (Gen 47:5–6), but does not function appositionally. It may also be used as an insertion device, "to insert in a text extraneous remarks" (37). For example, Gen 6:4 and Deut 3:9 are both parenthetical statements beginning with a conjunctionless noun.

¹⁴ Andersen, *Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 49.

¹⁵ The root לוט is infrequent in biblical Hebrew, since apart from the proper name Lot, it has only two other occurrences: 1 Sam 21:10—"The sword of Goliath . . . is covered (לוט [qal pass.]) with a cloth (שמלה) behind the ephod"; and 1 Kgs 19:13—"And when Elijah heard, he covered (וילט) his face with his cloak (באדרתו) and went out and stood at the opening of the cave." These uses of לוט cooccur with some sort of fabric or cloth as the covering object, which suggests a similar image here. Barker notes the use of the cognate vb. לאט in a context of mourning (2 Sam 19:5) (*Isaiah's Kingship Polemic*, 85). Although there is no specific term in biblical Hebrew for a mourning or funerary veil, the context of the pericope certainly invites an association with a burial shroud or mourning garment.

Doyle argues that the metaphor of the restoration of marital status is behind Isa 25:6–8. In this view, the two "covering" nouns function as a "rare word-play metaphor" with the verb בלע [*to devour*] (because of its phonetic similarity with בעל [*to marry*]), to describe the provision of food, a future, comfort, and dignity (*Metaphorically Speaking*, 254–57). This proposal is creative, but ultimately not convincing, since these are not the terms typically used for a bridal veil or other female garment, which are צִמָּה (*cloth to cover the face*) and צִעִיר (*cloth wrapped around the face*) (cf. Karel van der Toorn, "The Significance of the Veil in the Ancient Near East," in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical Jewish and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995], 328). The supposed pun with בלע and בעל is also tenuous, because it depends on two different tri-radical roots, and is not a valid parallel to Jer 1:11–12, which Doyle cites as an analogous case. In the Jeremiah pun, the tri-radical roots are the same: the noun שֶׁקֶד (*almond tree*) with the participle שֹׁקֵד (*watching*).

¹⁶ Hosch suggests that the grammar "marks the sudden outburst of the prophet (whoever he might be) who comes to understand the implications of the feast prepared and the items of separation removed" ("Textlinguistic Analysis," 59). While our aim is not to suppose the author's psychological state, there may be truth here, in that the marked syntax of Isa 25:8a is appropriate for a statement of such emotional and theological import. Cf. Driver, who cites Isa 25:8 as an example of the prophetic perfect used with an exclamatory effect (*Tenses in Hebrew*, 21).

iconography, it is difficult to say with certainty. The banquet here has been explained as a meal related to a covenant,¹⁷ enthronement,¹⁸ military victory, non-yahwistic cultic practices (i.e. the *marzēah*),¹⁹ or some combination of the above. Andrew Abernethy concludes, based on the use of food and drink imagery in the rest of Isa 1–39, that the banquet in Isa 25 is intended to promote the kingship of YHWH: "With these [aforementioned] positive portrayals of eating in Isa 1–39 commonly relating to YHWH's supremacy amidst imperial contexts, it seems likely that the book invites an interpretation of this feast through an imperial lens."²⁰ Abernethy does not dismiss the other possible explanations, but ultimately finds the imperial connection to be the

¹⁷ Evidence from the ancient world shows that covenant ratification were associated with a meal. For example, Esarhaddon's succession treaty stipulates eating and drinking as part of a binding oath (J. Wright and M. Chan, "Feasting, Bronze and Iron Age," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Archaeology*, vol. 1, ed. D. Master [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013], 402). The Mari documents also attest to this association (ARM 8:13), as do the Amarna letters (EA 162:22–25) (Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 77).

Biblical texts also describe covenant ratification meals, e.g. Isaac and Abimelech (Gen 26:17–31) and Jacob and Laban (Gen 31:43–55). Perhaps the biblical text most similar to Isa 25:6–8 is the meal of Exod 24:11, which is generally identified as a covenant ratification meal (cf. M. Noth, *Exodus*, OTL [London: SCM, 1962], 196). In particular, H. Hagelia cites the presence of the elders at both meals as evidence that both are covenant meals ("Meal on Mount Zion—Does Isa 25:6–8 Describe a Covenant Meal?" *SEA* 68 [2003], 73–96). Polaski also argues that the mention of the elders in 24:23 is tied to the covenant ratification ceremony of Exod 24, though he goes on to argue that they can function in a sacerdotal role (*Authorizing an End*, 139–42).

¹⁸ Cf. David's enthronement in 1 Chr 12:39–41; Solomon's in 1 Chr 29:11. T. Willis rejects the connection with Exodus 24, arguing that the "elders" of Isa 24:23 are not, in fact, leaders of the Israelite community but members of the divine court ("Yahweh's Elders [Isa 24.23]: Senior Officials of the Divine Court," *ZAW* 103.3 [1991], 375–85).

¹⁹ Millar suggested that the thematic structure of Isa 24–27 follows a Canaanite mythical cycle (= threat, war, victory, feast). Within this schema, the feast in Isa 25 celebrates the victory of YHWH over the powers of chaos (*Origin of Apocalyptic*, 81). More recently, Barker has argued that the West Semitic *marzēah* may be in the background of this banquet scene, which has similarities to the Ugaritic depictions in its formula of preparation and in its association with death. There are differences between the two meals, however, including the *marzēah*'s emphasis on the quantity of food/drink versus the emphasis on the quality of the food/drink in Isa 25. Another key difference is the final kingship of YHWH over death versus the perpetual struggle between Ba'al and Mot. In this reading, the meal of Isa 25:6 is a polemical contrast to the *marzēah* institution (Barker, *Isaiah's Kingship Polemic*, 94–6).

²⁰ Abernethy argues further that the meal of Isa 25:6–8 is a celebration of YHWH's (existing) kingship rather than a coronation meal (*Eating in Isaiah: Approaching the Role of Food and Drink in Isaiah's Structure and Message*, Biblical Interpretation Series 131 [Leiden: Brill, 2014], 81–2). See also Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 358.

focal element. This connection with kingly rule in Isa 24–27 is corroborated by the statement announcing YHWH's reign on Mt. Zion in the near context (24:23).²¹

Finally, the brief song of v. 9 is sung by the multi-national banqueters and portrays a worldwide acknowledgement of YHWH's kingship.²² This is reminiscent of the earlier mountain scene (2:2–4), in which the nations (כל העמים) stream to Mt. Zion to learn *torah*. As with Isa 25:6–12, this scene is cast in a future time (באחרית). Although Isa 25:6–8 does not mention the *torah*, it nonetheless evokes the earlier vision. The mountain inclusio, concentration of words related to feasting, and the emphatic repetition of כל, serve to unite Isa 25:6–10a in their expression of lavish provision for the people gathered to Zion, who have "waited" on YHWH.

3.2. Unit 2 (25:10b–12)

ונדוש מואב תחתיו	^{10b} And Moab will be trampled down in his place,
כהדוש מתבן במי ²³ מדמנה	like the trampling of straw in the water of a dung pit.
ופרש ²⁴ ידיו בקרבו	¹¹ And he [Moab] will extend his hands in its midst
כאשר יפרש השחה לשחות	like a swimmer extends his hands to swim,
והשפיל גאותו עם ארבות ידיו	and he [YHWH] will lay low his pride
	with the skill of his hands.
ומבצר משגב חומתיך	¹² And the high fortifications of your walls
השח השפיל	he has brought down, he has laid low,
הגיע לארץ עד עפר	cast to the ground, to the dust.

²¹ The royal feast also appears in the Baal Cycle, in which Baal hosts a banquet for the gods but fails to invite *Mot*, a snub which provokes the confrontation between Baal and *Mot* (cf. *KTU* 1.5 i 5–7).

²² Bernard Wodecki, "The Religious Universalism of the Pericope Is 25:6–9," in *Goldene Äpfel in Silbernen Schalen*, ed. K.D. Schunck and M. Augustin (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 43.

²³ The Masoretic *kethiv* is the construct of the noun מים (*waters of*). The *qere* is the locative prep. בְּמִי (*in*), a poetic construction which can also occur with the prepositions ל and כ. The versions and textual witnesses are divided: reflecting *kethiv* (1QIsa^a, Symachus, and Targum) and reflecting *qere* (OG and Pesh) (Van der Kooij, "Text-Critical Notes," 14). However, the OG preserves a particularly free rendering at this point: ὃν τρόπον πατοῦσιν ἄλωνα ἐν ἀμάξαις (*as they tread a threshing floor with wagons*). Given that the consonantal text of both MT and 1QIsa^a is במי and that the *kethiv* fits the contextual swimming simile, the translation above reflects the *kethiv* (Duhm, *Jesaia*, 154; B. Becking, "As Straw is Trodden Down in the Water of a Dung-Pit: Remarks on a Simile in Isaiah 25:10," in *Isaiah in Context: Studies in Honour of Arie van der Kooij on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, VTSup 138, ed. M. N. van der Meer, et al. [Leiden: Brill, 2010], 3–13).

²⁴ The rendering "he will spread out" for פרש is not ideal, given that swimmers cup rather than spread their hands. "Extend" or "stretch out" is therefore preferable (John Ellington, "A Swimming

This brief oracle against Moab represents a crux in the interpretation of Isa 24–27 (see the excursus below). In terms of cohesion, the unit emphasises the spatial lowering of Moab (v. 10–*trampled down* [נָדוּשׁ], *trampling* [הִדּוּשׁ], *dung pit* [מִדְמֹנָה]; v. 11–*lay low* [הִשְׁפִּיל]; v. 12–*brought down* [הִשָּׁה], *laid low* [הִשְׁפִּיל], *cast to the ground* [הִגִּיעַ לָאָרֶץ], and *dust* [עֶפֶר]).

In continuity with the banquet unit, it uses *w^eqatal* (=future) verb forms until the final verse, which shifts to *qatal* forms (as well as second person address). This latter group of three verbs closes the section and breaks the consistency of the mainline *w^eqatal* verbal chain: הִשָּׁה (*he has brought low*), הִשְׁפִּיל (*he has laid low*), and הִגִּיעַ (*he has cast down*). The rest of the Moab oracle is future-oriented, so one might have expected instead three *yiqtol* verbs (since they are not clause-initial). In addition, there is an unexpected second-person direct address to Moab (*your walls*), which until this point appears only in third-person (using the proper name, 3ms pronouns, and 3ms verbal conjugations). A verb of perfective aspect may, of course, refer to an action in any time, including a future action,²⁵ including the "prophetic perfect" and the so-called accidental perfective by which "a speaker vividly and dramatically represents a future situation both as complete and as independent."²⁶

Lesson [Isaiah 25.11], "BT 47.2 [1996], 246–47).

²⁵ See discussion in Chapter 4. Cf. Waltke and O'Connor, *Syntax*, 485–6: "representing a future action or situation as complete and independent leads to a certain dramatic quality or representation"; S. R. Driver: "The perfect is employed to indicate actions the accomplishment of which lies indeed in the future, but is regarded as dependent upon such an unalterable determination of the will that it may be spoken of as having actually taken place: thus a resolution, promise, or decree, especially a Divine one, is frequently announced in the perfect tense" (*Tenses in Hebrew*, 17). The prophetic perfect "imparts to descriptions of the future a forcible and expressive touch of reality, and reproduces vividly the certainty with which the occurrence of a yet future event is contemplated by the speaker" (18). Driver notes that sometimes the prophetic perfect may consist of a single verb, whereas sometimes it may stretch across a whole chain of perfect verbs, often switching back and forth as if viewing the future actions from either the present standpoint or a future, "ideal" standpoint. When the perfect is found in a description of the future, it can give variety to the scene or emphasis to certain parts (20).

²⁶ Waltke and O'Connor, *Syntax*, 490.

Given that these three verbs are part of the judgment on Moab, they portray the judgment of Moab as a finished act, thereby emphasising the certainty and finality of the action.²⁷ The double adverbial phrases in 25:12 (*to the ground / to the dust*) corroborate the finality of the action. Finally, as seen above in regards to the conclusion of other units, the shift in verbal aspect may also help signal the end of the unit.

3.3. Excursus: The Problem of Moab in Isaiah 25:10b–12

3.3.1 *The Problem*

The appearance of Moab in Isa 25:10b–12 has long troubled interpreters of Isa 24–27. There are a couple of major reasons for this difficulty: first, the specificity of the reference to a small neighbouring nation is exceptional in a composition which is otherwise remarkably universal, even cosmic, in scope.²⁸ Second, given the immediate literary context of restoration and comfort for all nations (25:6–10a), the Moab scene is particularly ugly—a man stomped down into a cesspool, struggling desperately to get up but repeatedly kicked back down into the pit. Indeed, it seems "a world of thought and emotion separates the drying of tears . . . from the scene that follows [25:10b–12]."²⁹ Why, in an otherwise cosmically-oriented text, would Moab

²⁷ Driver notes a "change of construction" in the use of the perfect in descriptions of the future, in which the writer shifts from "an expression of *modality* to the statement of *a fact*" (emphasis original) (*Tenses in Hebrew*, 18).

²⁸ Chapters 24–27 are distinct from the "Oracles about the Nations" in part due to the former's minimal references to specific nations. Chapters 24–27 do, however, contain the following references to specific peoples or places: Mount Zion (or "this [holy] mountain")/Jerusalem (24:23; 25:6, 7, 10; 27:13), Moab (25:10), the land of Judah (26:1), Jacob/Israel (27:6, 12), the River [Euphrates] (27:12), the Brook of Egypt (27:12), the land of Assyria (27:13), and the land of Egypt (27:13).

²⁹ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 364. Kaiser also does not mince words: "The despicable vulgarity of the present passage exceeds even the bloodthirstiness of ch. 24" (*Isaiah 13–39*, 204).

be singled out for exclusion from "all peoples" at the divine table?³⁰ This excursus will explore this question with a focus on Moab as a literary figure in the Hebrew Bible.

3.3.2 Existing Proposals

The anomalous reference to Moab in Isa 25 has, of course, generated a number of interpretive proposals, from citing Moab as the interpretive key to the entire composition, to simple excision.³¹ Advocates of the latter find the censure indicative of polemical intrusion irreconcilable with the rest of the composition. While some do not comment further,³² others attribute it to a period of particular hostility toward Moab—either recalling a past military defeat³³ or anticipating one in the future.³⁴ Regardless of the historical moment, many agree that 25:10b–12 is a "misplaced

³⁰ Polaski's statement is representative: the particularity of the mention of Moab "seems aberrant among the vague and general events which characterize the Isaiah Apocalypse" (*Authorizing an End*, 192). Similarly, Lindblom states that "das Wort über Moab gehört sicher nicht hierher" and that it must be treated as "eine literarische Einheit für sich" (*Jesaja-Apokalypse*, 43). See also March, "A Study of Two Prophetic Compositions," 103; Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 62; and William Elder, "A Theological-Historical Study of Isaiah 24–27" (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 1974), 75.

³¹ Charles Torrey, "Armageddon," *HTR* 31 (1938), 246, who emends מואב (*Moab*) to אויב (*enemy*).

³² Johnson, *Chaos*, 12, 62.

³³ Eissfeldt, *Old Testament*, 126–27. Moab has a long history in ancient Levantine politics. The earliest Assyrian reference to Moab is a building inscription of Tiglath-Pileser III (728 B.C.E.), in which Moab appears in a list of nations giving tribute. Between this year and c. 652 B.C.E., the toponym Moab occurs some 14 times in published Neo-Assyrian texts, mostly in the context of tribute. Bruce Routledge suggests that after Assyria's withdrawal from the Levant c. 640 B.C.E., Moab was a submissive client state (*Moab in the Iron Age: Hegemony, Polity, Archaeology* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004], 201–20). As a vassal of Assyria, Moab helped to quell an Arab rebellion, and later became a client state of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar and helped put down Johoiakim's revolt. The state of Moab fell to Babylon in 582 B.C.E. and all evidence points to the subsequent dissolution of Moab as a geo-political entity (see Campbell, "Moab," in *The Oxford Guide to People and Places of the Bible*, 200). These indications of allegiance to imperial power and Moabite support of imperial efforts against Judah, analogous to Edom (see Obad 10–14), may have given rise to hostility like that seen in Isa 25:10–12.

³⁴ Duhm identified the reference to Moab in Isa 25 as its defeat under Alexander Jannaeus, described by Josephus (*Ant.* 13.13.5) (*Jesaja*, 153).

fragment"³⁵ or "appended" in some way due to its apparent discontinuity with its context.³⁶

A different approach interprets "Moab" as a symbol, much like "Babylon" was used as symbol for Rome in some early Christian texts (1 Pet 5:13; Rev 14:8) or "Kittim" for the Romans in some sectarian texts and pesharim (cf. LXX Dan 11:30).³⁷ As a cipher of sorts, "Moab" in Isa 25:10b would not refer to an Iron Age nation-state, but to another group, perhaps the people living in the territory previously known as Moab who opposed the returnee community (cf. Neh 13:1).³⁸ More specifically, Polaski argues that Moab in 25:10 is a cipher for a certain socio-cultic (not necessarily ethnic) group banned from the worshipping restoration community, analogous to Nehemiah's appeal to Deuteronomistic law. In this view, Moab is singled out in Isa 25:10 because, as one of the groups excluded from the assembly of YHWH in Deut 23:1–4, Moab represents a "symbolic threat to proper order at the sanctuary."³⁹ This reading is consistent with Polaski's interest in ethno-religious boundaries in the post-exilic Judean community.⁴⁰

³⁵ Göran Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda: Images of Enemies in the Book of Isaiah*, CB Old Testament Series 56 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 160.

³⁶ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 335.

³⁷ The typological substitution of "Kittim" for the "Chaldeans" (e.g. Hab 1:6a) allowed the pesharist to "identify the imperial power of the biblical text with the sweeping imperial power of his own time" (Hagedorn and Tzoref, "Attitudes to Gentiles in the Minor Prophets and in Corresponding Pesharim," *DSD* 20.3 [2013], 498–9).

³⁸ Wildberger suggests that that "Moab" in Isa 25:10 refers to those who opposed the rebuilding of Jerusalem under Nehemiah. In this view, these people lived in the former territory of Moab, so the term was used to express the hostility felt toward those who actively resisted the efforts of the returnee community (*Isaiah 13–27*, 540), but concedes that lack of evidence prevents confidence in this matter.

³⁹ Polaski, "Deconstruction, Construction, and Argumentation," 30. The other excluded groups are the physically and socially stigmatised and the Ammonites. The reason stated for Moab's exclusion is their attempt to curse Israel during the wilderness wanderings. Interestingly, the text specifies that neither Edom nor Egypt are to be hated, since the former is "your brother," and the latter was the land of Israel's sojourning (Deut 23:8–9 [Eng. 7–8]).

⁴⁰ Erika Fitz argues that the Hebrew Bible portrays Moab in two main ways: first, as a "State" (masculine portrayal) and, second, as a "People" (feminine portrayal). The former speaks of Moab in the singular, as an enemy nation to be conquered and through which to show the supremacy of YHWH.

Other more idiosyncratic postulations illustrate the creative lengths to which scholars have gone to explain Moab's presence in Isa 25. Blenkinsopp suggests that Moab was added by a scribe who associated the reference to YHWH's hand (25:10a) with judgment.⁴¹ Sweeney suggests that Moab's appearance is motivated by a pun on לוט (the "covering" in 25:7).⁴² Given the literary playfulness of these chapters, such a pun would not be out of place. However, the common noun לוט has a mundane meaning, used in parallel with מטכה (*cover*) in 25:7, and there is no evidence of double-entendre in v. 7 or other allusion to the Lot stories. Watts completely reverses the sense of vv. 10b–12, reading the passage not as an oracle, but as a vindictive continuation of the hymnic song. As such, the speakers of the song are

claiming a petty right of sovereignty over [Jerusalem's] small neighbour, Moab. . . . While God is tending to weighty matters that involve the world of that day, . . . Jerusalem's attention is fixed on a spiteful provincial rivalry. The scene pictures God's frustration and elicits the reader's disappointment.⁴³

While this reading may be emotionally satisfying, it simply is not supported by the text. The quoted speech ends at 10a, and the destruction of Moab is portrayed positively without any intimation of YHWH's disapproval. The multiplicity of interpretive proposals speaks to the difficulty of this brief passage.

The latter often speaks of Moabites in the plural, as people who tempt or corrupt the people of God. These Moab "People texts" are, for Fitz, post-exilic symbolic representations of the opponents of the *gola* community after its return to Yehud. In this reading, the strict prohibition against marriage to Moabite women in Ezra-Nehemiah is not aimed at ethnic Moabites, but at all *gola* outsiders, even other Yahwists. She rejects the term "adaption" for the reuse of the Deut 23 law, finding instead "no innocent search for relevance, but rather a mission to create authoritative exclusions that are *not* mandated by a straightforward reading of the laws" ("A Significant Other: Moab as Symbol in Biblical Literature" [Ph.D diss., Emory University, 2012], 258).

⁴¹ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 364, "especially in view of the mountainous nature of [Moab]." This scenario is unlikely given that YHWH's hand is resting on (נוח), not striking, the mountain, a term which is never used for violent action.

⁴² Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 337.

⁴³ Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, 394–95.

3.3.3 The Biblical Picture(s) of Moab: A Very Brief Overview

The Hebrew Bible presents a mixed portrayal of Moab(ites) and attitudes toward the nation.⁴⁴ On the one hand, the biblical texts depict Moab as a brother nation (explained through Lot's relationship to Abraham) and, on the other, a hated enemy (cf. the disparaging origins account [Gen 19:30–38]). Within Deuteronomy alone, the Moabites are attributed divine rights to their land and protection from annexation by virtue of their connection Abraham through Lot (בני לוט) (Deut 2:9), while also being excluded from the worshiping community (Deut 23:3).⁴⁵ Moab is featured in several prophetic oracles against foreign nations, though sometimes the antagonistic oracles are supplemented with a conciliatory note (Isa 16:3–4; Jer 48:47).⁴⁶ The Balaam story famously depicts the Moabite King Balak as a (failed) curser of Israel. Moab appears here as a paradigmatic enemy, as representative of those who curse Israel (cf. Num 24:9; Judg 3 and the Ehud narrative; Gen 12:3) and lead them into apostasy (Num 25; 1 Kgs 11:7, 33; 2 Kgs 23:13).⁴⁷ The returnee community reinterprets the pentateuchal laws against admitting Ammonites and Moabites into the assembly, as a blanket separation of anyone of mixed or foreign ethnicity (כל ערב) (Neh 13:1; cf.

⁴⁴ Outside the Bible, Moab is attested in the famous Mesha Inscription (*ANET* 320–21), in a few Assyrian annals, and in a sparse but growing archaeological record. Assyrian sources record tribute from Moab: Salamanu of Moab offered to Tiglath-pileser (734–732) (*ANET* 282); a letter to the Assyrian ruler (probably Tiglath-pileser) notes the vassalage of Moab and others (ND 2765).

⁴⁵ Notice the surprising language used for Edom, Moab, and Ammon in Deut 2, namely language typically reserved for Israel. *YHWH* has given certain land to these nations "as a possession," which, along with kinship, serves as the basis for not "harassing" these nations (cf. Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1990).

⁴⁶ Daniel 11:41 is an interesting case, since it lists Moab along with Edom and the leaders of the Ammonites as those who escape from the slaughter. Newsom observes the oddity of the reference, since none of these groups appear in the earlier prophetic eschatological scenarios. The three groups, plus Philistia, appear in the *War Scroll* (1QM 1.1–2) as allies of Belial (Carol A. Newsom with Brennan W. Breed, *Daniel: A Commentary*, OTL [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014], 357).

⁴⁷ The Balaam story seems to have been a widespread tradition, as some version of it appears in several biblical texts (Num 22–24, Mic 6:5, Judg 11:25, Josh 24:9, Deut 23:4, and Neh 13:2); Balaam son of Beor is also the prophet of the trans-Jordanian Deir 'Alla Inscription.

Ezra's concern that the "holy seed" [זרע הקדש] has become "mixed" [התערבו] with the peoples of the land [Ezr 9:2], including the Moabites [Ezr 9:1]). Yet the book of Ruth explicitly connects the lineage of David with a Moabitess (Ruth 4:17). In broad strokes, one can say that the biblical attitudes toward Moab vary significantly, sometimes emphasising its kinship relation and other times its hostility and temptation to apostasy, an ambiguity that doubtless reflects the long, complicated history between the nations.⁴⁸

3.3.4 *Moab in the Book of Isaiah*

Apart from the passage in question, Moab appears in two other passages in the book of Isaiah. The first is a brief reference (11:14), and the second is an extended oracle (15:1–16:14). The prevailing attitude in all three Moab texts is an antagonistic one. The first reference includes Moab in a list of subdued nations in the context of the eschatological repatriation of Israel. Moab is not singled out, but is one of several nations which will "obey" Israel (11:14).

The second appearance of Moab is as the subject of the *massa* of chs. 15–16, a collection of oracles comprised largely of a lament for the nation's destruction. The

⁴⁸ The Mesha Inscription supports the general theme of political animosity between Judah and Moab in the late Iron Age (Routledge, *Moab in the Iron Age*, 47). A similar situation holds for the biblical portrayal of Ammon and Edom, nation-states which are also understood to be descendants of Abraham (from Lot and Esau, respectively). Routledge notes the "genealogical approach" to world history in Genesis, by which Terah's travels towards the Levant initiates the next phase of history. The third generation from Terah produced the eponymous ethnic founders of the Levantine peoples near Israel—Moab and Ben Ami (both through Haran-Lot), Edom (Abraham-Isaac-Esau/Edom), Kedar (Abraham-Ishmael; results in Qedarite Arabs), and Aram (Nahor-Kemuel, results in kingdom of Damascus, often called Aram) (*Moab in the Iron Age*, 43). There is also a sense of shared history of land conquest between the Philistines, Edomites, Ammonites, and Moabites reflected in the Hebrew Bible. And "unlike the trope of radical difference, common to racist, nationalistic, and colonial discourse of the modern era, the Bible is concerned with drawing contrasts across a field of acknowledged similarity" (*Moab in the Iron Age*, 44). This background of "familiar alterity" should not be forgotten when interpreting biblical references to Moab.

collection includes a call to shelter Moabite refugees (16:3–4), but this gives way to further pronouncements of judgment (16:6ff).⁴⁹ In the oracle(s) of Isa 15–16, Moab is distinguished as a particularly prideful nation. In Isa 16:6 alone, there are six terms which refer to a haughty attitude:

שמענו גאון מואב	We have heard of the pride of Moab,
גא מאד	[He is] very proud!
גאותו וגאונו ועברתו	His arrogance and his pride and his rage,
לא כן בדיו	His boasting is not right.
	(Isa 16:6)

Although other nations are accused of pride in the oracles about the nations of Isaiah (chs. 13–23), Moab is most severely censured for this sin *par excellence*. Even outside the book of Isaiah, the pride of Moab was a "traditional motif"; cf. Zeph 2:8–10 (גאון, *pride*); Jer 48:7, 26 (הגדיל, *he magnified himself*), 29–30 (גאון, *pride*; גאה מאד, *he is very proud*; גבה, *loftiness*; גאון, *pride*; גאווה, *arrogance*; רם לב, *exultant in heart*; עברה, *arrogant anger*; בד, *boasting*), 42 (הגדיל, *he magnified himself*); Isa 25:11 (גאווה, *arrogance*; משגב, *high*).⁵⁰ A full discussion of Isa 15–16 is not possible here, but it is clear that pride is a particularly focal issue in the oracle of judgment.

⁴⁹ Eidevall considers the portrait of Moab in Isa 15:1–16:11 to be "deeply ambiguous" (*Prophecy and Propaganda*, 159). Even the call for protection may be the words of a Moabite embassy, in which case their appeal is swiftly denied (Hays and Irvine, *Eighth-Century Prophet*, 240). Hays and Irvine note that the speech of 16:3–5 is "filled with diplomatic compliments and niceties" (243). Others sense an ironic and mocking tone against Moab (Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 298; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 51, 57, 61). However, this reading of the Moab oracle is by no means accepted by all commentators. F.A. Sawyer, for example, notes the "remarkable sympathy" shown in the oracle (152). This assessment is due in part to attributing the call for protection to the prophet (rather than a Moabite embassy) (*Isaiah*, 155).

⁵⁰ G.R. Hamborg, "Reasons for Judgment in the Oracles Against the Nations of the Prophet Isaiah," *VT* 31.2 (1981), 151.

3.3.5 Moab in Isaiah 25—A New Explanation

Turning back to Isa 25, one might ask why Moab is singled out for punishment.⁵¹ Why not include Ammon, Edom, or perhaps the Philistines (cf. 11:14)? Why not Babylon, or a nameless enemy like the rest of Isa 24–27? It is important to take into account that the reason for judgment in 25:10b–12 is pride. The passage uses the term גאווה (*pride*, 25:11; cf. 16:6) for Moab, and its "high walled fortifications" (מבצר), as well as verbs associated with the judgment of pride (שפל, vv. 11, 12; משגב חומתיו, v. 12; and גגע, v. 12). Hubris, often represented spatially by height, is the most grievous sin in the book of Isaiah.⁵² A prideful individual or nation is characterised as one which defies YHWH's supreme rule, an attitude which "leads immediately to their categorical condemnation."⁵³

Given the particular association of Moab and pride—in general, and especially in the book of Isaiah—it is likely that Moab is singled out in 25:10 as a representative of all who are characterised by pride and thus reject YHWH's kingship.⁵⁴ The oracle of Isa 25:10b–12, then, provides a negative contrast of the prideful's fall, a foil, to the positive vision of the Zion singers who have passively "waited" on

⁵¹ The particularisation of judgment (from universal to specific) is known from other prophetic passages, and can be considered a convention of prophetic discourse. E.g. Isa 34 opens with a universal statement calling all nations to listen (34:1–2). After the trans-national introduction, however, Edom is singled out for judgment (34:5, 6) (Paul R. Raabe, "The Particularizing of Universal Judgment in Prophetic Discourse," *CBQ* 64.4 [2002], 659–60, 671–74). Raabe also cites Isa 3:13–15; 30:27–33; 34 (universal to particular) Isa 2–3; 10:22–23; 13; 14:24–27; 23:8–9; 28:14–22 (particular grounded upon the universal). Similarly Isa 63:1–6 depicts a bloodied YHWH coming back from Edom after trampling not Edom alone, but "the peoples" (Isa 63:6).

⁵² Arrogance is the "standard crime of all enemies in the book of Isaiah" (Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 159). The noun גאווה also appears in Isa 9:9; 13:3; and 13:11. Synonyms appear frequently: e.g. גאון in 13:11, 19; 14:11; 16:6; 23:9.

⁵³ H.G.M. Williamson, *Variations on a Theme: King, Messiah and Servant in the Book of Isaiah* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 12.

⁵⁴ Also Childs, *Isaiah*, 185; Cho and Fu, "Death and Feasting," 131; Edgar Conrad, *Reading Isaiah*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 63.

YHWH. In short, Isa 25:10b–12 should be read in light of the characterisation of Moab as particularly prideful in the *massa* of chs. 15–16. As such, the trampled Moab represents pride, which in accordance with the univocal motif in Isaiah, will be lowered "on that day" (cf. Zeph 2:10; 3:11).

Besides Moab as a representative of the proud, an additional, admittedly more conjectural, rationale may lie behind the choice of Moab here: the "ideal" royal ascension story. The ancient ideal was that the king, after subduing all his enemies, would sit down on his throne to reign over a peaceful (or at least subjugated) kingdom. The narrative is illustrated by the davidic succession story—after David accedes to the throne and receives the covenant (2 Sam 7), the narrative details David's many military victories. He systematically subdues all his enemies, including the Philistines (8:1), Edom (8:14), Zobah (8:3), Syria (8:6), Ammon, Amalek (8:12), and—most important for the present discussion—Moab (8:2). Moab's subjugation is summed up in the comment: David "made [the Moabites] lie down on the ground" (השכב אותם ארצה), killing some and sparing others (2 Sam 8:2). While the language of putting one's enemies into the ground is stock language in the rhetoric of ancient power dynamics, it is noteworthy that both texts (1 Sam 8:2 and Isa 25:10b–12) specify Moab's debasement on the ground.

This possible echo of David's reign is one of many references to davidic kingship as an eschatological hope in the book, bringing in a future time of peace, justice, subjugation of national enemies, and the establishment of Israel's ideal borders (cf. Isa 9:7; 16:5). David is not explicitly mentioned in 24–27, so the suggestion above may be less tied to davidic rule and more to a more generic "ideal" royal accession. But as some other eschatological scenes from "First-Isaiah" draw on

traditions of an idealised davidic rule, ch. 25 may also make use of these traditions in a sort of abbreviated pictures of the coming divine rule.⁵⁵ Without positing literary dependence here, the Isaiah passage nonetheless has resonances with the ideal royal ascension story, in which the king's vanquished foes go hand in hand with his benevolence towards his faithful subjects.

To summarise, the case presented here is that Moab in Isa 25:10b–12 represents the prideful, evoking the ideal royal ascendancy story (perhaps David's humiliation of the Moabites). It represents the defeated enemy nation in the idealised monarchy, as well as the defeated chief sin in the idealised kingdom: the low (=trusting) are lifted up, and the high (=prideful) are brought down. This continues the thematic emphasis of Movement 1—the kingship of YHWH, who as the cosmic king will defeat his foes, earthly and heavenly, and restore order to his kingdom.

3.4. Cohesion in Isaiah 25:6–12

The section's two units are both set in the future "day": YHWH's feast on Mt. Zion, including the song of its attendees (vv. 6–10a), and the judgment of Moab (vv. 10b–12). The action of both parts of the unit is expressed through a chain of *w^eqatal* verbal forms, resulting in morphosyntactic cohesive ties across the section.⁵⁶ The feast scene begins with the narrativial וַעֲשֶׂה (v. 6), the embedded song begins with the

⁵⁵ This is not unlikely, since traditions from Israel's early history appear elsewhere in the book. One significant example of "historical traditions" is the exodus motif which is most developed in "Deutero-Isaiah," but also appears in Isa 12 (quotes the Song of Moses, Exod 15) and 19:19–22 which portrays the Egyptians as slaves rescued from bondage. Other allusions to early history include the wilderness wanderings (Isa 4:5//Exod 40:38; Num 9:16; Deut 1:33), the "day of Midian" (Isa 9:4//Judg 7:19–25).

⁵⁶ Pace Doyle, who considers vv. 6–8 a separate "metaphorical statement," due in part to its *w^eqatal* verbal forms as opposed to the *qatal* forms of vv. 9ff. (*Metaphorically Speaking*, 253).

verb ואמר (v. 9), and the Moab oracle begins with ונדויש (v. 10b)—all on the main line of discourse.⁵⁷ Unlike the hymn of 25:1–5, which has no prose introduction, this lyrical unit is introduced by the phrase ואמר ביום ההוא, which embeds it grammatically and temporally within the banquet scene. The hymn also receives a brief causal conclusion (כי תנוח יד יהוה בהר הזה, *for the hand of YHWH rests on this mountain*), a subordinate clause which further situates it within its narrational setting. Notice that the embedded speech of the song breaks the main line with its various non-discursive forms: verbless clauses (e.g. אלהינו זה), *qatal* verbs (קוינו), and cohortatives (נגילה). In sum, this string of *w^eqatal* verbs lends syntactical cohesion to the section and places its verbal action in the eschatological future.⁵⁸

A second cohesive element which contributes to the structure of this section is the double spatial inclusio: the mountain and the mud pit. As mentioned above, the repetition of the locative phrase בהר הזה (vv. 6, 7, 10) forms brackets around the banquet scene and highlights Mt. Zion as the location of the banquet. However, the second of the two inclusios is also topographical—the mud pit—a negative foil to Mt. Zion. Whereas YHWH's mountain is spatially high, Moab's scene is bracketed by a very different location: במי מדמנה (*in the waters of a dung pit*, v. 10b), and ארץ עד עפר (*the ground, as far as the dust*, v. 12).⁵⁹ The contrasting spatial inclusios result in a

⁵⁷ Bosman, "Syntactical Cohesion," 31. Bosman rightly characterises this future-oriented main line as "*w^eqatal* forms which continue other predictive forms like הנה + participle, ביום ההוא + *yiqtol* or other *w^eqatal* forms" (30–31). Adding to the verbal progression, YHWH is the main actant throughout the text; cf. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–4*, 53.

⁵⁸ As might be expected, there is also a non clause-initial *yiqtol* [*yiqtol* + X] which also carries on the main verbal line (v. 8): וחרפת עמו יסיר מעל כל הארץ (*and the reproach of his people he will turn aside from all the earth*). As such, the verb still carries on the future orientation of the unit, but the non-verb-initial word order signals a tense shift to imperfect. Along with the divine speech formula of 25:8, the shift may help signal the end of the first unit, a phenomenon which we have seen already (cf. Isa 24:12).

⁵⁹ It is quite possible that the term מדמנה (*dung pit*) is a derogatory pun on the Moabite town מִדְמָן (Madmen, Jer 48:2).

two-part eschatological vision, in which those who "waited" on YHWH are raised to the highest point (utopia), and those who inhabit lofty places are lowered (dystopia).

Finally, there is a thematic tie between the banquet and the judgment scenes that supports the above literary observations. This theme, or more accurately motif, is the association between feasting and displays of royal or imperial power. Because this motif appears widely in ancient Near Eastern texts and iconography, it may contribute to our understanding of Moab's judgment in this section. Nathan MacDonald has argued that, besides the sheer necessity of eating or the possibility of reflecting a conservative impulse in society (e.g. establishing or maintaining communal bonds), food and feasting were also used as a "force for social change."⁶⁰ As such, feasting could serve as both a means of mobilising support and of displaying power and success. And, more pertinent for our text, he observes that "in the Old Testament the table is the locus for judgment and vindication."⁶¹ While the modern ethic may find this association repulsive, it was nonetheless part of the imagery available to advertise the power of the ancient king.

Cho and Fu apply this association between feasting and judgment to their discussion of Isa 25:7–8 and the devouring of *Mot*. Like MacDonald, they note that the trope of feasting, especially royal feasting, is related to the motif of judgment.⁶² Other biblical texts reflect this connection: Pharaoh's feast was the setting for the cupbearer and baker's respective fates (Gen 40:20–23); Solomon had "prepared a feast for all his servants" (1 Kgs 3:15a) before the judgment scene of the women's

⁶⁰ Nathan MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 134; cf. 166–95.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁶² Cho and Fu, "Death and Feasting," 139.

claim to a baby (1 Kgs 3:16–28); a divine hand takes over the banqueting of Belshazzar to turn it into a judgment scene against him (Dan 5). Although Cho and Fu only explain the defeat of *Mot* in this way, the connection extends also to Moab in vv. 10b–12.

The Greek, and especially Aramaic, textual traditions of Isa 25 exaggerate the association between feasting and judgment. Taking *Mot* as the grammatical subject, the OG depicts "death" (θάνατος) as the eating subject, i.e. the one doing the swallowing (rather than YHWH).⁶³ This reflects an underlying grammatical ambiguity of the Hebrew, but clearly changes the sense of the passage. The Targum goes even further, describing the meal as a scene of horror:

Yahweh of hosts will make for all the peoples in this mountain a meal. And although they supposed it is an honor, it will be a shame for them and great plagues, plagues from which they will be unable to escape, plagues whereby they will come to their end."⁶⁴

These early versions are clearly interpretive and expansive, but are mentioned here as illustrations of the thematic association of a banquet as place of judgment.

⁶³ The OG places death's swallowing action in the past (penultimate to God's ultimate victory) while Theodotion and Symmachus both reflect a passive idea.

⁶⁴ Tg. Isa. 25:6, *The Bible in Aramaic* vol. 3, *The Latter Prophets*, ed. Alexander Sperber (Leiden: Brill, 1962).

4. Section 2 (26:1–6)—Hymn of Trust

ביום ההוא	¹ On that day,
יִשְׂרָאֵל ⁶⁵ הַשִּׁיר הַזֶּה בָּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה	this song will be sung in the land of Judah:
עִיר עֲזָ לָנוּ	"We have a strong city!
יִשׁוּעָה יִשְׁתַּבֵּחַ ⁶⁶ חוֹמוֹת וְחָל	He establishes salvation as walls and ramparts.
פֶּתַח שַׁעֲרִים	² Open the gates,
וַיָּבֵא גֹי צַדִּיק	so that that the righteous nation can enter,
שֹׁמֵר אֱמֻנָה	the one that keeps faithfulness.
יִצְרָח סִמּוֹךְ ⁶⁷ תִּצְרֵחַ שְׁלוֹם שְׁלוֹם	³ The dependent mind you will keep in complete peace,
כִּי בַךְ בָּטוּחַ	because he trusts in you.
בָּטַחוּ בַיהוָה עַד עַד	⁴ Trust in YHWH forever,
כִּי בֵיהּ יְהוָה ⁶⁸ צוֹר עוֹלָמִים	yes, in YH YHWH, a rock through all ages!
כִּי הִשָּׁה יֹשְׁבֵי מְרוֹם	⁵ For he has lowered the inhabitants of the heights,
קָרִיָּה נִשְׁגָּבָה	the lofty city.
יִשְׁפִּילָנָה יִשְׁפִּילָה עַד אֶרֶץ	He lowers it, he lowers it to the ground.
יִגְעֲנָה עַד עָפָר	He brings it down to the dust.
תִּרְמַסְנָה רַגְלֵי	⁶ Feet trample it,
רַגְלֵי עָנִי	the feet of the poor,
פְּעָמֵי דָלִים	the footsteps of the needy."

Isaiah 26:1–6 marks a clear discourse transition and consists of a quoted hymn, situated by a prose introduction. Most agree that 26:1 marks a new section, but there

⁶⁵ 1QIsa^a: ישיר (*qal*, *one will sing*) for the MT *hoph*. (or *qal* passive). It seems more likely that the Qumran reading harmonises the verb with the active verb in 25:9 (ואמר).

⁶⁶ Vulgate and Targum: passive (*will be established*), presumably because there is no explicit grammatical subject. Williamson points out that one might expect a subject (i.e. God or YHWH) with the MT active verb, since it occurs at the beginning of a new section. He suggests following the passive reading for the sake of assonance (with the vb. ישר in v. 1), which is consistent with the style of Isa 24–27 ("Sound, Sense and Language," 7–8). However, the above translation follows the MT since it has the support of 1QIsa^a and is the *lectio difficilior* while still being reasonably coherent.

⁶⁷ This phrase is difficult, and the word סמוך is attested elsewhere at Ps 112:8 (and cited in the masorah). Ps 112:7–8 links the "סמוך heart" with a "steady heart" (נכון לבו) and with "trust" (בטח) in YHWH. The OG renders the first two words of Isa 26:3 as ἀνταλαμβάνόμενος ἀληθείας (*laying hold of truth*). Cunha argues that this rendering is interpretive (rather than directly representing the Hebrew with two equivalent Greek words), based on the use of the Greek phrase in the Qumran documents (e.g. 1QS 4:5; 8:3) (*LXX Isaiah 24:1–26:6*, 112).

⁶⁸ The doubled divine name is also attested in 1QIsa^a, Aq. (ἐν τῷ κυρίῳ κῡριστος), though not in the OG, which has a tendency to condense (see Cunha, *LXX Isaiah 24:1–26:6*, 113–14), Targ., Pesh., or Vulg. 4QIsa^b reads ביה אֱלֹהֵי (Van der Kooij, "Text-Critical Notes," 14). Isa 12:2 also uses this double name, and the shortened form יה appears in the psalms with some frequency. The deletion suggested by BHS is unnecessary given the text's psalmic form.

The doubled divine name has inscriptional attestation in a burial inscription near Lachish: "The (Mount of) Moriah Thou has favoured, the dwelling of Yah, Yahveh" (J. Naveh, "Old Hebrew Inscriptions in a Burial Cave," *IEJ* 13 [1963], 86). Naveh observes the poetic qualities of the inscription, which "recalls biblical psalmody both in form and in content" (89).

is some question about where the hymn ends.⁶⁹ The reading here takes v. 7 as the beginning of a new, non-hymnic section. There are several reasons that a division at v. 7 is justified. First, the "city" motif which is pronounced in vv. 1–6 is not a part of vv. 7–19.⁷⁰ The hymn concludes with a statement about the lowering of the lofty city (v. 5–6), just as the prophetic announcement of this movement concludes with a statement about the lowering of the lofty city (v. 12). Second, v. 7 begins a section which addresses YHWH directly (beginning in v. 8). And most importantly, v. 7 introduces a new time orientation, shifting from a celebratory song set in the eschatological future, to a poignant prayer in present time.⁷¹

The hymn of 26:1–6 is introduced by a brief prose introduction: ביום ההוא יושר. השיר הזה בארץ יהודה. This opening statement contextualises the song within the larger prophetic vision, on a literary level, but also in terms of time and place. The discourse connection establishes a connection between *this song* and the quoted song to follow. This is a referential tie in which the demonstrative adjective in השיר הזה (*this song*) functions cataphorically as it points forward to the quoted speech. The content of the song (vv. 1b–6) is consistent with the genre of "song" (שיר). If we allow this referential indication to determine the extent of the quoted speech, the typically celebratory song (שיר) best fits vv. 1–6, whereas a different genre label (e.g. petition [תפלה] or lament [קניה]) would better describe the content of vv. 7ff.

⁶⁹ The following are a representative sample of structure proposals for this section: Sweeney (*Isaiah 1–39*)–vv. 1b–6, 7–10, 11–19, 20–21. Oswalt–vv. 1b–6, 7–15, 16–19, 20–27:1 (*Book of Isaiah*), Polaski (*Authorizing an End*, 207)–vv. 1–6, 7–21 (Polaski traces two themes in each unit: salvation and trust/waiting; he concludes: "the tension between 26:1–6 and 26:7–21 [does not] significantly impede understanding ch. 26 as a unified composition").

⁷⁰ Interestingly, Cunha concludes his analysis of the OG at 26:7, stating that "LXX Isa 24:1–26:6 forms a literary unit that revolves around the theme of 'cities' and the 'ungodly'" (*LXX Isaiah 24:1–26:6*, 46). He finds an inclusio of πόλεις ὁ γκαρὰς in LXX Isa 24:10, 12 and 26:5–6, but unfortunately does not fully explain his decision to exclude LXX Isa 26:7–27:13 from his analysis.

⁷¹ Johnson, *Chaos*, 67.

A second referential tie indicated in the prose introduction concerns the time of the quoted speech. It obtains with the combination of the definite noun יום and its (also definite) demonstrative pronoun הַהוּא, *that day*. This is the third occurrence of the phrase בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא in Isa 24–27, the effect of which is to place the quoted song in the same future time as the announced destruction of the cosmos by YHWH (24:1–23) and YHWH's regnal banquet (25:6–12).

The body of the song itself (vv. 2–6) shows a "striking symmetry" around the city-motif, as it opens with an announcement of the walls and gates of a victorious, strong city (עיר עז) and closes with a description of the demise of the lofty enemy city (קריה נשגבה).⁷² The central piece, however, is trust. Its thematic structure can be outlined as follows:

<i>Prose Introduction</i>	(v. 1a)
Praise for Strong City	(vv. 1b–2)
Call to Trust YHWH	(vv. 3–4)
Praise for Destruction of Lofty City	(vv. 5–6).

This lyrical contrast between the strong city and the ruined city echoes the prophetic contrast in vv. 6–12, in which YHWH's people on Mt. Zion are contrasted with his enemy Moab in the mud pit ("he saved us" [25:9] vs. Moab's pride lowered [25:11]). Note that the strong city's boundaries are expressed as permeable and open, which seems to defy normal usage: rather than actually *having* walls and ramparts, the victorious city has YHWH's salvation; rather than closing gates against enemies, the victorious city opens them for entry.

Finally, the call to trust (vv. 3–4) also echoes a theme introduced in the preceding section, through the synonymy of the terms בטח (*to trust*) and קוה (*to wait*)

⁷² Sawyer, *Isaiah*, 218.

upon). The song of the banquet worshipers rejoices that those who "waited on YHWH/him" were saved (25:9).

5. Summary

These two sections (25:6–12 and 26:1–6) repeat and develop the pattern established in Movement 1, by continuing the prophetic announcement of the reign of YHWH (24:1–23//25:6–12) and responding to this announcement in hymnic praise (25:1–5//26:1–6). The scene of YHWH's feast further describes his rule as king and, together with the rest of the section, contrasts two responses to his rule—trust or pride—and their ultimate fates (Mt. Zion or dung pit). Unlike Movement 1, however, there is a second response in Movement 2, one that is far less utopian. It is to this second, very different response that we now turn.

CHAPTER 6

MOVEMENT 2 (ISAIAH 25:6–26:21), CONTINUED

1. Introduction

Shall not the judge of the whole earth do what is right? These are the words of Abraham, pleading for the life of his nephew before the destruction of Sodom (Gen 18:25b). Within the narrative context of Gen 18, Abraham acts as an intercessor who, in the face of looming destruction of his kinsman's city, appeals to divine justice (משפט) and pleads to the "doer of justice" (יעשה משפט) to spare the city on account of the righteous who live there. Although the question—both an appeal and a protest—is far removed from our prophetic text, Abraham's words capture the heart of the prayer found in Isa 26:7–19. Until this point, the tone of the composition has been celebratory (if disturbing at points) in its announcement of the amazing victories that YHWH will accomplish in the future. But here, the prayer gives voice to the pained questions raised by the faithful in the present. After the vision of YHWH's eschatological mountain banquet and defeat of Moab, this prayer turns to the realities of the present, and the problem of the acute discontinuity between "that day" and present experience. The barrage of emotive statements and petitions within this second response section questions, protests, and appeals to YHWH on the basis of his royal role of establishing justice and order. And though "the fundamental problem of the community has not yet been resolved,"¹ the prayer itself constitutes an expression of the dependence called for (cf. 25:4; 26:3–4).

¹ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 342.

2. Structure and Genre

It is not difficult to understand why Isa 26 has been described as a "set of eschatological impressions . . . bold and clashing images."² From the eschatological hymn of trust (vv. 1–6), to the gnomic statements about the "path of the righteous" (v. 7), to the lament over the apparent triumph of the wicked (v. 11), to the resurrection statement (v. 19), the chapter has diverse content that seems to jump from one topic to another without clear structure.³ The prayer is full of paratactic syntax and obscure allusions, making the question of literary unity and coherence a particularly difficult one.⁴ Many simply take the chapter as a single unit, thereby interpreting the prayer as a continuation of the song (שיר) of 26:1.⁵ It is remarkable that Duhm, who popularised the "apocalyptic/lyric" text divisions within Isa 24–27, considered all of ch. 26 a single, "sehr künstliches" poem, only excluding vv. 1, 20–21.⁶ In this reading, the whole chapter is an eschatological song, a sort of paradoxical lament which is purposefully cast in the future. Thus, for Polaski, "YHWH's people will lament their ineffectuality even as YHWH's reign is coming into effect," exemplifying the "perpetual nature of YHWH's discipline."⁷

² Polaski, *Authorizing an End*, 206.

³ For Lindblom, the contrast between the contents of vv. 15–19 and their context was so "absolut" that these verses cannot be considered part of the "Isaiah Apocalypse" (*Jesaja-Apokalypse*, 64.).

⁴ Millar exemplifies a particularly heavy-handed treatment of textual difficulties in ch. 26, given his assessment that it is "in rather bad shape at this point." Because vv. 9–10 do not fit his metrical or thematic hypothesis or, in his words, "make any sense," he omits them from his analysis (*Origin of Apocalyptic*, 48–49). Interestingly, however, Millar concludes that 26:1–8 is part of the earliest material in these chapters, since he finds its prosodic style to be similar to that of Second Isaiah, Isa 60–62, and Zech 9 (103–04).

⁵ Polaski, *Authorizing an End* (who, although sensing a "tension" between 26:1–6 and 26:7–21, nonetheless considers ch. 26 a "unified composition" (216); Sweeney (*Isaiah 1–39*, 338), labels 26:1b–21 a "Communal Complaint Song" and subdivides this into several smaller sections (vv. 1b–6, 7–10, 11–19, 20–21)

⁶ Duhm, *Jesaja*, 154.

⁷ Polaski, *Authorizing an End*, 279.

To be sure, ch. 26 does not feature any of the disjunctions seen thus far in the composition, such as abrupt shift from prophecy to hymn, the expression "on that day," or even shifts in discourse participants. However, the text does not allow for this reading in light of the contrasting descriptions of the idealised "day," on the one hand, and the lament of the praying community on the other. Whereas "that day" is described in utopian terms (e.g. death devoured; all nations feasting with YHWH; no tears or shame; enemies vanquished), the prayer of 26:7–19 reflects deep pain and longing for an as-yet unfulfilled promised restoration. The dichotomous contrast between the promised future and the reality of the community is a contrast of a tearless future and a painful present. Failure to recognise the text division after 26:6 results in a single confusing "song" (שיר) which both praises YHWH for a victorious strong city, whose gates are opened for an incoming righteous and faithful nation (vv. 1b–6), *and* laments the apparent flourishing of evil in the face of a distressed and ineffective community.

Given the infeasibility of an eschatological lament, it is better to take vv. 7–19 as a separate section.⁸ In addition to the thematic incompatibility of future redemption and present lament, the term שיר (v. 1) corroborates this structure. The term שיר is typically used in contexts of praise or thanksgiving, and would not be expected for lament. Therefore, the chapter falls more naturally into two sections: vv. 1–6 (eschatological song of hope) and vv. 7–19 (communal prayer of trust; vv. 20–21 are transitional).

⁸ Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 211, 213. Hibbard divides the chapter into two parts (26:1–6 and 26:7–27:1) and suggests that 26:1–6 relates more closely to Isa 25 than to 26:7ff. (*Intertextuality*, 123).

With the exception of v. 19, most agree that the prayer is spoken in the voice of the community or of a representative individual. The genre is variously labeled as a communal complaint song,⁹ communal prayer,¹⁰ or song of lament.¹¹ Others simply describe it as a psalm-like composition of "mixed" character.¹² These various labels reflect the eclectic feel of the section, which does not fit into a particular formal category, but instead combines formal features of wisdom (especially vv. 7–10), recitation of "history," and lament, all of which are transposed into a first-person prayer format.¹³

⁹ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 341. However, he includes 26:1–6 in this section. Sweeney further divides the section into the following "generic subentities": song of praise (vv. 1–6), "affirmation of confidence in YHWH's righteousness" (vv. 7–10), petition (vv. 11–19), and exhortation (vv. 20–21).

¹⁰ Hayes and Irvine, *Eighth-Century Prophet*, 311.

¹¹ Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 558. He considers v. 19 an oracle of salvation ("the great 'however,' over against vv. 17f.) but nonetheless still very much part of the section. Johnson also considers the section a three-part lament (general statement of belief [vv. 7–10], plea regarding the specific situation [vv. 11–15], and lament proper [vv. 16–18]).

¹² Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 213. Hibbard does not assign a traditional genre, but describes it as a "prayer for YHWH's intervention on behalf of the righteous against the wicked" which contains a communal lament (*Intertextuality*, 135, 119).

¹³ Plöger considers 26:7–19 to be *sui generis* (*Theocracy and Eschatology*, 63). Blenkinsopp observes that the book makes use of conventional genres but rarely follows a fixed form. He cites several examples of creative genre use in the book, such as the wisdom parody of ch. 14 and the psalmic passages such as 12:1–6; 25:1–5; 33:2–6; and 42:10–13 (*Isaiah 1–39*, 79).

3. Section 3 (26:7–21)—Prayer of Hope

3.1. Unit 1 (26:7–10)

ארה לצדיק מישרים	⁷ The path of the righteous is level;
ישר מעגל צדיק תפלס	you make the way of the righteous upright.
אף ארה משפטיך יהוה קוינוך	⁸ Yes, in the path of your judgments, YHWH, we wait for you;
לשמך ¹⁴ ולזכרך תאות נפש	the soul's desire is for your name and your remembrance.
נפשי אויתך בלילה	⁹ My soul longs for you in the night,
אף רוחי בקרבי אשחרך	yes, my spirit within me searches diligently for you.
כי כאשר ¹⁵ משפטיך לארץ	Because when your judgments are on the earth,
צדק למדו ישבי תבל	the world's inhabitants learn righteousness.
יחן רשע	¹⁰ [But when] the evil person is shown mercy,
בל למד צדק	he will not learn righteousness;
בארץ נכחות יעול	in the land of uprightness he will act corruptly,
ובל יראה גאות יהוה	and he will not see the majesty of YHWH.

Isaiah 26:7–10 begins the prayer with a proverbial flavour, using language steeped in the wisdom tradition. The unit coheres referentially through its second person address to YHWH, lexically through its use of wisdom terminology (collocation), structurally through its poetic parallelism and repetition of certain words in adjacent lines (concatenation), and thematically through its focus on the relationship between justice and righteousness.

First, notice the consistent second person direct address to YHWH, marked using inflected verbs תפלס (*you make straight*, v. 7); pronominal suffixes משפטיך (*your judgments*, v. 8), קוינוך (*we wait for you*, v. 8), לשמך (*for your name*, v. 8), לזכרך (*for your remembrance*, v. 8), אויתך (*I long for you*, v. 9), אשחרך (*I seek you diligently*, v. 9), משפטיך (*your judgments*, v. 9); and vocative address (YHWH, v. 8). The

¹⁴ The rather unusual affixed *lāmed* may mark the direct object (perhaps an Aramaism) or, in my view more likely, convey a directional sense.

¹⁵ The particle כאשר sometimes introduces a conditional clause, but if this is the case here, it is, according to Spradlin's analysis, the only such conditional particle in the book of Isaiah. This particle is elided from v. 10a, a clause which continues the "conditional cluster" (Michael Roy Spradlin, "An Investigation of Conditional Sentences in the Hebrew Text of Isaiah" [Th.D. diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991], 113–4).

second person reference chain is consistent until the final word of the unit, which shifts from second to third person (גאות יהוה, *majesty of* YHWH).

Second, the unit features several sapiential terms and collocations, which create a web of lexical-cohesive ties that give it a distinctly proverbial feel. The result is something like a proverb transposed to prayer. Words with strong wisdom associations include ארה (*path*), משרים (*upright*),¹⁶ מעגל (*way*), תפלס (MT *pi'el=you clear the way*),¹⁷ and אשחר (*I seek diligently*).¹⁸ In addition to the individual terms, the collocation of the synonyms ארה and מעגל (in poetic parallel in v. 7) further evokes a proverbial literary environment, as the word pair is found elsewhere only in Proverbs.¹⁹ The construct phrase "path of [your] judgments" is also proverbial (Prov 2:8; 8:20; 17:23; cf. Isa 40:14). The sapiential quality also appears in the concept of learning (למד) (cf. Prov 2:9; Ps 119:7). These wisdom terms and ideas do not constitute a quotation of any particular text, but are mimicking proverbial style.

¹⁶ Besides its three occurrences in Isaiah (26:7; 33:15; 45:19), the term משרים appears seven times in the Psalter (9:9 [8]; 17:2; 58:2 [1]; 75:3 [2]; 96:10; 98:9; 99:4), five times in Proverbs (1:3; 2:9; 8:6; 23:16, 31), twice in the Song of Solomon (1:4; 7:10 [9]), and once in each Daniel (11:6) and 1 Chronicles (29:17).

¹⁷ The verbal root פלס only occurs six times in the Hebrew Bible: in Isaiah (26:7), Psalms (58:3; 78:5) and Proverbs (4:26; 5:6; 5:21), often in collocation with a term for *path/way*. In particular, the idea of "making straight" one's path is a wisdom trope.

¹⁸ The verb שחר (*to search diligently*) occurs mostly in Proverbs (1:28; 7:15; 8:17; 11:27; 13:24) and Job (7:21; 8:5; 24:5); also Ps 63:2; 78:34; Hos 5:15; Isa 26:9; 47:11.

¹⁹ Cf. Prov. 2:15; 5:6 for the pair. Besides two uses in Isaiah (26:7; 59:8), the noun מעגל itself is found almost exclusively in Psalms and Proverbs (Ps 17:5; 23:3; 65:12; 140:6; Prov 2:9, 15, 18; 4:11, 26; 5:6, 21). The noun appears only twice elsewhere, both in Isaiah (26:7; 59:8).

I exclude three occurrences of the homonym (*encampment*, 1 Sam 17:20; 26:5, 7), listed as a separate entry in both *HALOT* and *DCH*. The latter lists two possible additional homonyms: *pasture* (Ps 65:12; 23:3) and *cart, chariot* (Ps 65:12), but in my judgment, it is questionable if these should receive separate entries.

A similar word pair frequently used in the wisdom literature (though not in Isa 26) is the noun ארה with the more common דרך. In his discussion of Isa 2:3, Joseph Jensen notes that this pair "designate[s] manner of life or behavior [and] seems to be almost exclusively a wisdom usage" (*The Use of Tōrā by Isaiah: His Debate with the Wisdom Tradition*, CBQS 3 [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1973], 94. Based in part on this word pairing, he identifies wisdom influence on the mountain Isaianic scene in Isa 2:2–4. Surprisingly, Jensen does not identify the same wisdom influence in Isa 26, even though it features a similar lexical pair.

The syntax of the opening statement is a verbless, gnomic expression, also similar to a proverb:

ארה לצדיק משרים	The path of the righteous [is] upright. (Isa 26:7a)
מחשבות צדיקים משפט	The thoughts of the righteous [are] just. (Prov 12:5a)

However, the unit features several different verbal forms in addition to this opening verbless clause (e.g. *yiqtol* and *qatal* in vv. 7b, 8a). At the level of poetic parallel, verb forms can vary for different reasons, including semantic and aesthetic.²⁰ In other words, there may be no "real temporal sequence" in the different forms, but a stylistic difference to mark a type of grammatical parallelism (analogous to the use of different persons, number, or gender in poetic parallel). This is the case in the opening two clauses of the present section (26:7), which are grammatically varied but semantically synonymous:

ארה לצדיק משרים	[Verbless clause]
ישר מעגל צדיק תפלס	[Imperfect (<i>yiqtol</i>)]

In other cases the verb tense contrast has a merismatic effect, thereby highlighting a totality. Consider another example of different "tenses" in poetic parallel, often hidden in translation:

לא ישבתי [qatal] עם מתי שוא	I <i>do not</i> consort with scoundrels;
ועם נעלמים לא אבוא [yiqtol]	And with hypocrites I <i>do not</i> associate.
	Ps. 26:4

Adele Berlin offers the slightly stronger translation that emphasises the tense shift:

I *have never* consorted with scoundrels;
And with hypocrites I *will never* associate.²¹

In this case, the effect of the verb tense contrast is not only to define the couplet (i.e.

²⁰ Berlin, *Dynamics*, 36.

²¹ Ibid., 137.

"stylistic"), but also to emphasise its point by way of understated merism.²² Isaiah 26:9 is an analogous couplet, which uses both *qatal* and *yiqtol*, which both defines the two lines as a couplet and emphasises the point:

נפשי אִוִּיתִיךָ בַּלֵּילָה ‖ My soul *has waited for you* in the night;
 אִם רוּחִי בִקְרָבִי אֲשַׁחֲרֶךָ ‖ Yes, my spirit within me *will diligently search for you*.

It would be a mistake to interpret the verb "tenses" in this poetic couplet as a reference to strict time, but also mistaken to ignore the tense variation altogether. The effect of both *qatal* and *yiqtol* forms in Isa 26:9, then, is a consistent devotion to YHWH. As such, the wisdom unit (vv. 7–10) uses verb tenses in a non-temporally focal sense.

Third, the unit is held together structurally through the use of poetic concatenation, i.e. the use of link words across adjacent lines.²³ *Path* (אַרֶּץ) is repeated in v. 7 and v. 8; *your judgements* (מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ) is repeated in v. 8 and v. 9; *the soul's desire/my soul longs for* (both with the noun נֶפֶשׁ) is repeated in v. 8 and v. 9; *learn righteousness* (pl. צִדֵּק לִמְדוּ and s. לִמְד צִדֵּק) is repeated in v. 9 and v. 10, respectively. One effect of this lexical repetition across line-breaks is to maintain the forward motion of the poem, as well as to balance normal poetic parallelism (*intra*-line) with a less common poetic device (*inter*-line connections).

One final means by which vv. 7–10 is held together is the repetition of the

²² Another instance of the parallelism of *qatal* and *yiqtol* verbs is Isa 28:18a, the effect of which "contributes to the totalizing effect" produced by the *negative-positive* parallelism of the verse (Couey, *Reading the Poetry of First Isaiah*, 89).

²³ Another term for this literary device is *anadiplosis*, the "juxtaposition of the same word or root in successive cola" (William Irwin, "Syntax and Style in Isaiah 26," *CBQ* 41.2 [1979], 241–45). Irwin finds eight instances of anadiplosis in Isa 26, although some of these are based on idiosyncratic stichometric divisions. For example, his proposed translation of 26:7 breaks up a construct phrase with a vocative word: "The way, O Just One, of uprightness // O Upright One, the just path you make smooth" (243). Though Irwin rightly picks up the repetition across line breaks, several of his proposals involve emendation and strained syntax.

terms משפט (*judgment*) and צדקה (*righteousness*) and their close synonyms, though not in the prophetic hendiadic couplet (e.g. Isa 1:27; 5:7; 9:7; 32:1).²⁴ The use here is the pl. form משפטים, which is rare in the book of Isaiah, only used once elsewhere (Isa 58:2, also in grammatical parallel with *righteousness* [צדקה] and in construct with the synonymous צדק). For this reason, Thomas Leclerc finds these two occurrences of the term to be peripheral to the wider justice (משפט) concept as used in the book.²⁵

Although the term (either "YHWH's *mishpatim*" or "your *mishpatim*") is not common in Isaiah, it is more widely seen in the psalms. There the "judgments" of God are cited as the basis for the ordered reign of the king. Psalm 72 is a royal psalm, the last of the collection of the "prayers of David" (תפלות דוד, v. 20).²⁶ It opens with a petition for God to give *justice* (pl. משפטים) and *righteousness* (צדקה) to the king:

אלהים משפטיך למלך תן וצדקתך לבן מלך ידין עמך בצדק וענייך במשפט ישאו הרים שלום לעם וגבעות בצדקה	O God, give your <i>judgments</i> to the king, and your <i>righteousness</i> to the son of the king. May he judge your people with <i>righteousness</i> , and your poor with <i>justice</i> . May the mountains raise up peace for people and the hills, with <i>righteousness</i> .
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²⁴ This noun-pair occurs with some frequency in Isaiah, appearing in all major sections of the book except chs. 40–55 (e.g. Isa 5:7; 28:17; 32:16; 33:5; 56:1; 59:14).

²⁵ Thomas Leclerc, *Yahweh is Exalted in Justice: Solidarity and Conflict in Isaiah* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 72. Most often, the pl. משפטים is used on conjunction with the n. חקים or other synonym, e.g. Deut 4:5 and Mal 3:22. The pl. can also parallel the n. תורה (*instruction*) (Deut 33:10—teach (משפטיך) or מצות (*rules*) (Neh 9:29—did not obey your *rules* [מצותיך]; Dan 9:5—turned away from your משפטיך).

²⁶ Goulder argues that Pss 51–72 constitute the "prayers of David" (72:20). He suggests that this final psalm (Ps 72) was written "for Solomon" upon his accession to the throne. It is a prayer for the new king, reflecting several ideals for the new monarch, including the administration of justice, the establishment of prosperity (שלום, vv. 3, 7), and the subjugation of foreign nations (v. 11). Solomon famously achieved these ideals, albeit for a short time (1 Kgs 3; 4; 10) (*The Prayers of David (Psalms 51–72): Studies in the Psalter, II*, JSOTSup 102 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990], 26, 240–46).

יִשְׁפֹּט עֲנִיִּים יוֹשִׁיעַ לְבֹנֵי אֲבִיוֹן וַיִּדְכָּא עוֹשֵׂק	May he <i>give justice</i> to the poor of the people, may he save those who are in need, and crush the oppressor. (Ps 72:1–4)
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The word-pair (pl. משפטים and צדקה) appears here as a quality of royal rule, given to the king by God.²⁷ The kingly ideal is to enact the divine equity, particularly in view towards the disadvantaged in society.²⁸ As a prayer, Ps 72 also asks for the reign to bring abundant *shalom* for the people (vv. 3, 7) and subjugation of rival powers (vv. 8–11). The prayer blesses the new king and wishes that his name will last forever (יהי שמו לעולם v. 17). This cluster of terms related to kingship is found in Isa 26:7–10, which in keeping with the royal motifs already seen in Isa 24–27, is not only a pious prayer, but a confession of allegiance to the rule of YHWH.

Verse 9, in particular, relates justice and righteousness by contrasting two opposing situations: the first situation results in the spread of the knowledge of righteousness, and the second results in the *lack* of this knowledge. The conditional

²⁷ Williamson observes the "ideal king" motif in earlier prophecies of Isaiah, several of which draw on language from the Davidic covenant (e.g. Isa 9:1–7). Although this promised figure is not explicitly called a king (מלך), he is nonetheless a royal figure who will establish the davidic kingdom with *justice* and *righteousness* (Isa 9:6[7]). Williamson also points out the connection between the establishment of peace (שלום) and the role of kingship, which he argues refers to rest from external enemies in the context of Isa 9 (*Variations on a Theme*, 34–6, 42). Even in the texts which speak of kingship apart from the David tradition, the stress is on the role of the king rather than his person, a role which "is bound up as closely as it is possible to imagine with the maintenance of 'justice' and 'righteousness'" (70).

²⁸ See also Isa 33:22. These qualities were associated with kingship in the Near East more widely. In the ancient world, there was a strong connection between kingship and the giving of "laws," the core of which was the preservation of divine order. In Mesopotamia, this was represented by Šamaš, the sun-god, and his earthly royal representative. The Hammurabi stele is decorated with the image of the king and the sun-god, and it calls the laws "fair judgments" (*dīnāt mīšarim*). The idea of the "just king" in Mesopotamia is also reflected in personal names like Lugal-di-ku₅ "The king is judge" (Sophie Démare-Lafont, "Judicial Decision-Making: Judges and Arbitrators," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*, 335, 340).

However, we should not assume that ancient cultures had an abstract concept of "law" as used in modern society (John Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018]), 287–97. It has become increasingly clear that the Hammurabi inscription, in particular, could not have served as a comprehensive law code as known today in Western society, supported by lack of citation in the trial records from the same general time (Bruce Wells, "Law and Practice," in *A Companion to the Ancient Near East*, ed. Daniel C. Snell [Blackwell, 2005], 185).

is expressed using a **כִּאֲשֶׁר** clause in v. 9:

For when your judgments are on the earth [verbless clause],
the inhabitants of the earth learn righteousness [*qatal*].
[But when] the evil person is shown mercy [*yiqtol*],
he will not learn righteousness [*qatal*]." (26:9)

The second half of the poetic parallel elides the conditional particle **כִּאֲשֶׁר** and omits any conjunctive relationship such as *wāw*, leaving the contrastive relationship between the lines to inference. It also expresses poetic variation by switching from plural to singular. The opposing situations are, therefore, between the giving of **משפטים** and the giving of mercy, as if justice and mercy are opposing ways of interacting with humans (cf. Isa 30:18, which, in contrast, connects the two ideas closely).

This unit offers a sapiential meditation on divine order, based on the terms **משפטם** and **צדקה**, the world under the rule of the ideal king. It anticipates and sets the rhetorical stage for the lament to follow.

3.2. Unit 2 (26:11–19)

יהוה רמה ידך בל יחזיון	¹¹ O YHWH, your hand is uplifted; they do not see.
יחזו ויבשו קנאת עם	Let them see and be ashamed at the zeal for [your] people.
אף אש צריך תאכלם	Yes, let the fire of your enemies consume them.
יהוה תשפת שלום לנו	¹² O YHWH, you will establish peace for us,
כי גם כל מעשינו פעלת לנו	for indeed all our works you have done for us.
יהוה אלהינו בעלנו אדנים	¹³ YHWH our God, other masters besides you have ruled
זולתך ²⁹	over us;
לבד בך נזכיר שמך	you alone do we remember, your name.

²⁹ For an etymological explanation of the term **זולתך**, see John Huehnergard and Aren Wilson-Wright, "A Compound Etymology for Biblical Hebrew **זולתך** 'Except'," *HS* 55 (2014): 7–17. They argue that the word is not a verbal derivative, but rather a "compound derivation" of the relative particle *zū/du*, negative particle *la*, and pronominal morpheme *-tī*.

מתים בל יחיו	¹⁴ They are dead; they will not live.
רפאים בל יקמו	They are Rephaim; they will not rise.
לכן פקדת ותשמידם	Therefore, you visited them with destruction,
ותאבד כל זכר למו	and you wiped out all memory of them.
יספת לגוי יהוה	¹⁵ You have added to the nation, YHWH,
יספת לגוי נכבדת	you have added to the nation. You are glorified!
רחקת כל קצוי ארץ	You have enlarged all the borders of the land.
יהוה בצר פקדוך	¹⁶ YHWH, in distress they attended to you.
צקון ³⁰ לחש מוסרך למו	The pain of incantation [was] your discipline on them.
כמו הרה תקריב ללדת	¹⁷ Like a pregnant woman about to give birth
תחיל תזעק בחבליה	writhes and cries out in her pangs,
כן היינו מפניך יהוה	so we are because of you, YHWH.
הרינו חלנו	¹⁸ We were pregnant, we writhe,
כמו ילדנו רוח	like we were giving birth to wind.
ישועת בל נעשה ארץ	Salvation we have not created on earth,
ובל יפלו ישבי תבל	and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen.
יחיו מתיך	¹⁹ Your dead will live;
נבלתי ³¹ יקומון	as a corpse, they will rise.

³⁰ The root of the *hapax* צקון is unclear, along with the reason for its final *nûn*. Ibn Ezra identified the root as יצק (*qal*, to pour out), with a dropped first radical and a paragogic *nûn* (cf. Deut 8:3, 16) (Friedländer, *Commentary of Ibn Ezra*, 118). Alternatively, the ן- ending may be evidence of a "northern dialect" (Scott Noegel, "Dialect and Politics in Isaiah 24–27," *AuOr* 12 [1994], 186–87).

Others follow the OG in emending צקון to the first person (*we poured out a whispered prayer*) (D.M. Fouts, "A Suggestion for Isaiah XXVI 16," *VT* 41.4 [1991], 472–73. Fouts notes that the paragogic *nûn* is rare with the perfect tense (less so with the imperfect; *GKC* §441, §47m), but this view lacks manuscript evidence. Moreover, Ibn Ezra's comments about the morphology of the word hold significant weight in regards to the acceptability of the MT grammar in this case.

Another possibility is to emend לחש to a verb, and צקון to a noun: "O LORD, in distress we sought you; in constraint we spoke an incantation when your discipline was upon us" (Donald Polaski, "The Politics of Prayer: A New Historicist Reading of Isaiah 26," *PRSt* 25.1 [1998], 365). Emendation should be last resort, but in this case the alternative root suggestion is plausible. The root צוק (hollow verb), to oppress, distress, allows for semantic parallel in the first two clauses of v. 16. If the form is a *qal* passive participle (notice the *qāmeṣ-šūreq* vocalisation pattern), then it might be rendered: "YHWH, in distress, they attended to you, being distressed, he spoke an incantation while your discipline was on him." My rendering maintains the semantic parallelism while attempting to avoid consonantal emendation.

³¹ There appears to be a number disagreement between the noun נבלתי and verb יקומון. The noun's *hireq yôd* ending (*yôd* in the case of 1QIsa^a) appears to be a first person singular suffix (*my corpse*). The OG does not account for the suffix: ἀναστήσονται οἱ νεκροί, καὶ ἐγερθήσονται οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις ("The dead shall rise, and those who are in the tombs shall be raised" [NETS]). While it is impossible to say with certainty, the construction may be a scribal gloss, some kind of linking *hireq* (alternatively called the *hireq compaginis*, the paragogic *hireq*, or the *i* of the construct state), or a gentilic.

The *hireq compaginis* is thought to be an archaic form marking the construct state (Scott C. Layton, "The Hireq Compaginis," in *Archaic Features of Canaanite Personal Names in the Hebrew Bible*, HSM 47 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990], 107–54). A type of linking *hireq* is common in proper names, e.g. Melchizedek (*king of justice*) and Gabriel (*man of God*), as well as in the construct forms of kinship nouns like אחי, אבי, and אמי. On occasion the *hireq* can be used without expressing the construct state, likely for rhythmic purposes (Hos 10:11; Ps 113:5, 6; 114:8; 123:1) (Joüon and Muraoka, *Grammar*, §93 l–m). However, none of these functions explain the syntactic environment of the term נבלתי in 26:19.

The gentilic option (or adjectival sufformative –i) represents Hebrew's ability to form adjectives

הקיצו ורננו ³² שכני עפר כי טל אורת טלך וארץ רפאים תפיל	The dust dwellers will wake up and sing for joy, because your dew is the dew of lights, but the land of the Rephaim you will cast down.
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This second, larger half of the prayer contains a variety of topics and images, including the remarkable "resurrection" verse (26:19). It begins with a vocative address to YHWH, a feature which is repeated several times (vv. 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17). It also introduces a petitionary style, using jussive verbal forms, marking a contrast with both the exclamatory praise of 26:1–6 and the proverbial statements of 26:7–10. The prayer makes it clear that the situation of the community is consistent neither with the victorious tone of the song (vv. 1–6) nor with the ordered world of the gnomic statements (vv. 7–10).

One of the difficulties of this unit is its temporal perspective(s). By this, I do not mean its historical background or absolute time, but rather the text's orientation toward the past, present, and future. The verbal tenses used in 26:7–19 are varied, including verbless clauses, *qatal*, *yiqtol*, and jussive forms—all mixed together without an immediately apparent pattern. Some commentators have sought to identify elements from Israel's national history within the past orientation of these

(especially ordinals, gentilics, and patronymics) with the sufformative *hireq yôd*. However, the *-i* sufformative can also adjectivise other kinds of nominal forms (cf. Joshua Fox, *Semitic Noun Patterns* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003], 183: "The suffix [-i] is used in Hebrew . . . to convert substantives into adjectives"). If the *hireq* suffix on the form נִבְלָתִי in Isa 26:19 is functioning as an "adjectiviser," the effect in Isa 26:19 is to speak of the deceased state of the body at the time of the verbal action (see Philip Schmitz, "The Grammar of Resurrection in Isaiah 26:19a–c," *JBL* 122.1 [2003], 147 ["accusative of state"]). Cf. the adjectivising suffix *-i* in Gen 25:25 (*The first came out red* [אָדָמָה]).

³² Against the MT imperative verbs. in 26:19, there is strong textual support for reading the indicative mood: 1QIsa^a, OG, Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotian, and the Targum. The indicative reading also resolves a difficulty in the MT, namely that the "dust-dwellers" are addressed directly (pl.) and then YHWH is addressed directly (s.) in the same sentence. *Pace* Pulikottil, who explains the Qumran reading as an interpretive postponement of an immanent resurrection (wake up!) to an event in the more distance future (they will wake up) (*Transmission of Biblical Texts in Qumran: The Case of the Large Isaiah Scroll 1QIsa^a* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001], 134).

verses, though it is impossible to know for certain if these allusions refer to national narratives or if they are simply snapshots of "cultural memory" or oral texts.³³

However, such non-temporal functions of verb tenses in poetry do not render verbs completely unable to indicate time or temporal sequence.³⁴ Following the gnomic statements, there are lines in the prayer which cannot be explained in terms of tense variation for the sake of poetic parallelism. When these are traced, a discernible pattern emerges: an alternation between lament and expressions of trust:

Wisdom Preface	vv. 7–10 [proverb on justice and righteousness]
Lament	v. 11 [The evil do not see your uplifted hand]
Trust	v. 12 [You will establish peace for us]
Lament	v. 13–14 [Other masters have ruled over us]
Trust	v. 15 [You have enlarged the land]
Lament	v. 16–18 [Discipline and ineffectiveness]
Trust	v. 19 [Your dead will live]

Each of the "trust" statements in the lament reflects something of divine kingship. The first of these confesses trust that YHWH will establish peace for his people (v. 12), the second confesses trust that it is YHWH who has given territory to them (v. 15; cf. Exod 34:24; Deut 12:20), and the third confesses trust that YHWH will give new life to his people (v. 19).

³³ Williamson argues that the results of "tradition criticism" can be honed and developed with the socio-critical idea of cultural memory. He cautions against the assumption that a single "historical" allusion in a prophetic text must necessarily have in mind any larger narrative arc ("History and Memory in the Prophets," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Prophets*, ed. Carolyn J. Sharp [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016], 132–48).

³⁴ Even granting a significant poetic "defamiliarisation" (Lunn's term for the distinctive characteristics of poetry which have the effect of making comprehension more difficult and slowing down the reading process, thereby drawing attention to the text as an artistic expression), it must still be emphasised that poetic word-order "still has to remain within the limitations imposed by the syntactic constraints of the language" (Nicholas Lunn, *Word-Order Variation in Biblical Hebrew Poetry: Differentiating Pragmatics and Poetics*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs [Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006], 5). In other words, even as poetry pushes the boundaries of acceptable syntax, it cannot be called ungrammatical.

The final statement of hope (v. 19) is not unusual for a lament, which sometimes concludes on a positive note.³⁵ Isaiah 26:19 is probably the most discussed verse of Isa 24–27. Given its importance in the history of interpretation and its marked contrast with v. 14, it calls for particular (but by no means exhaustive) attention here. It should be stressed from the outset that v. 19, if understood apart from its context, could take on almost any meaning proposed, so identifying this context is important as an interpretive constraint.³⁶ While some interpret the dead rising as a reference to national restoration, like Ezek 37,³⁷ others insist that it must refer to a physical resurrection of the dead.³⁸ There is no doubt that the text was interpreted by later texts as a reference to eschatological resurrection (e.g. OG, Targum, and the "Messianic Apocalypse" [4Q521]).

The ending of the prayer is a striking confession of hope, although the nature of this resurrection is enigmatic. The identity of the speaker is not immediately clear, as it could be either the prophet (or community) or YHWH. So Beuken, for example, identifies the speaker as YHWH, and the term נבִלְחִי as a reference to the collective community.³⁹ However, since v. 19 concludes the communal prayer, which has

³⁵ See, e.g. the discussion of lament in Mic 7:1–10 in Carol J. Dempsey, "Micah 1:1–16 and 7:1–10: A Poet's Cry of the Heart in the Midst of Tragic Vision," in *Why? . . . How Long? Studies on Voice(s) of Lamentation Rooted in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, ed. Carol J. Dempsey, LeAnn Snow Flesher, and Mark J. Boda (New York: T&T Clark, 2014), 45–47.

³⁶ Von Roland Kleger, "Die Struktur der Jesaja-Apokalypse und die Deutung von Jes 26,19," *ZAW* 120 (2008), 526.

³⁷ Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 216; Kim (the birthing imagery of v. 19 is "symbolic of Judah's exile and return" which "culminates in the national resurrection, more than individual resurrection," (*Reading Isaiah: A Literary and Theological Commentary* [Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2016], 128); Hibbard (esp. given the communal restoration focus of the rest of the prayer and speaks to the immediate concerns expressed. V. 19 refers to the "'resurrection' of the nation from its moment of despair" (*Intertextuality*, 148); Johnson believes v. 19 to be a *Heilsorakel* spoken by YHWH (*Chaos*, 80–1); Day ("The Development of the Belief in Life after Death in Ancient Israel," 243–48); Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 567–70.

³⁸ John Sawyer, "Hebrew Words for the Resurrection of the Dead," *VT* 23 (1973), 234; John Mauchline, *Isaiah 1–39* (London: SCM, 1962), 193.

³⁹ Willem Beuken, "'Deine Toten werden leben' (Jes 26,19): 'Kindliche Vernunft' oder reifer

consistently referred to YHWH with 2s pronouns (or vocative of direct address), it seems more likely that v. 19 is a continuation of the communal voice (with its 2s pronominal suffixes).⁴⁰ This identification of the 2s suffix in v. 19a is also consistent with its use in v. 19b (which seems to more clearly refer to YHWH).

The most obvious tie is back to v. 14, with which v. 19 contrasts: *your* dead (v. 19) and *their* dead (14).⁴¹ The dead "other masters"/Rephaim that have ruled over the community have been visited with destruction, never to live/rise again.⁴² Even their memory has been wiped out.⁴³ The designation "master" (אֲדֹנָיִם) can refer to a variety of authority figures, including a husband, slave master, political ruler, or deity. In the context of the community prayer, these masters could refer to the gods of other nations or to the political figures that represented them. Some have suggested an allusion to Ba'al worship given the lexical similarity between the verb (בְּעִלּוֹנוֹ, *they*

Glaube?" in *Schriftauslegung in der Schrift: Festschrift für Odil Hannes Steck zu seinem 65 Geburtstag*, BZAW 300, ed. Reinhard G. Kratz, Thomas Krüger, and Konrad Schmid (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 141.

⁴⁰ Van Wieringen takes a slightly different angle, arguing that the speaker is a part of the community (vv. 7–10), for whom he intercedes (vv. 11–16) and to whom he speaks the promise of v. 19 ("I" and 'We' before 'Your' Face: A Communication Analysis of Isaiah 26:7–21," in *Studies in Isaiah 24–27*, 239–65, esp. 245). I find it more likely that v. 19 is spoken to YHWH, since this speech pattern is more consistent with the rest of the prayer, and there is no discourse cue to signal a shift in speaker.

⁴¹ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 371.

⁴² The mysterious *rephaim* are strongly associated with the dead, appearing several times in the Hebrew Bible as well as in other ancient Levantine literary texts. In Hebrew literature, it also refers to the mythological inhabitants of Canaan, and (often with disparaging connotations) to the denizens of Sheol (Isa 14:9; 26:14; Prov 2:18; 9:18; 21:16). Its Ugaritic cognate *rpu*, though still associated with the dead, appears to refer to divine beings, either divinised ancestors or the eponymous deity of this group (cf. Del Olmo, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, 3rd ed., vol. 2 [Leiden: Brill, 2015], 731–2).

⁴³ Like most enemies in Isa 24–27, these "other masters" remain unnamed. The term אֲדֹנָיִם can, of course, refer to divine or human authority. Some have proposed that the verb בְּעִלּוֹנָא connotes marriage or perhaps Baal worship, though these are admittedly rather speculative. Given the association with death, and the rejection of their "memory," I find it most plausible that these beings are either divinised dead kings and/or their patron deities. "Remembering the name" suggests allegiance to YHWH as distinct from other objects of veneration. Cf. Robert Gordon, "The Gods Must Die: A Theme in Isaiah and Beyond," in *Isaiah in Context: Studies in Honour of Arie van der Kooij*, ed. Michaël van der Meer et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 52.

have ruled over us, v. 13) and the name of the deity.⁴⁴ Perhaps the ambiguity is unavoidable, but I find it more likely a reference to deities rather than human kings. It is noteworthy that, outside this prayer, the *rephaim* are only mentioned once in the book of Isaiah—in the taunt (משל) against the king of Babylon (Isa 14:4–21):⁴⁵

Sheol below quivers for you,
to meet you upon arrival.
It wakes up the *rephaim* (רפאים) for you,
all who were *leaders of the earth* (עתודי ארץ).
It raises up from their thrones,
all who were *kings of the nations* (מלכי גוים).
(Isa 14:9)

In this taunting, parody context, the defeated king is pictured as going down to Sheol, greeted by all its royal inhabitants. These *rephaim* appear here as deceased royalty, called "leaders [lit. goats; Akk. *atūdu*] of the earth" and "kings of the nations."⁴⁶ There may be a purposeful literary allusion in 26:14 to this lyrical parody, but the point here is the significance of the term *rephaim*. The group is associated not simply with the dead *en masse*, but with dead royalty. Contrastingly, YHWH's people will live/rise, waking up from the dust and singing for joy because of the divine revivifying "dew of lights." The contrast is reiterated in the remainder of v. 19, between YHWH's dead, who will wake up from the dust, and the Rephaim (mentioned in v. 14), who will be cast down (v. 19).

⁴⁴ Barker, *Isaiah's Kingship Polemic*, 192.

⁴⁵ Note: the word רפאים appears once in Isaiah as a toponym ("Valley of Rephaim," 17:5).

⁴⁶ The existence of death cults and the divination of former monarchs is a fascinating historical question which unfortunately cannot be explored here. This cultural background is not often considered for Isa 26, although Hays reads v. 19 as a contrast between YHWH's dead and the "supposedly powerful divinised dead" (*Death in the Iron Age and in First Isaiah*, FAT 79 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011], 331). Cook also mentions the idea, but as a "striking memory of the term's older, more narrow application" ("Deliverance as Fertility and Resurrection," 171).

Given the strong Isaianic intertexts which speak of YHWH striking his people (either directly or through an instrument), one possibility is that the second person suffix of "your dead" is a subjective genitive. As such, "your dead" refers not simply to the praying community, but to those whom YHWH has himself killed (either literally or metaphorically). This concept is theologically difficult but is consistent with how the book has spoken of divine wrath elsewhere, particularly in Isa 5:25:

על כן חרה אף יהוה בעמו	Therefore, YHWH's anger burned against his people,
ויט ידו עליו ויכהו	and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them.
וירגזו ההרים	And the mountains trembled,
ותהי נבלתם כסוזה בקרב חוצות	and their <i>corpses</i> were like rubbish in the middle of the street.

It is suggestive that the only other occurrence of the term נבלה (*corpse*) in the book is this text, which speaks of the divine anger against his own people, earthquake, and *corpses* like rubbish in the streets.⁴⁷ As we will see below, the topic of the violence of YHWH towards his people is addressed directly in 27:7–11.

One final and thematically important group of cohesive ties in this unit centres on its use of royal motifs. YHWH is portrayed as the dominating, reigning sovereign in 24:1–23 and 25:6–8, but the theme of divine kingship continues into ch. 26. Although the theme is not stated so obviously as in previous sections, it nonetheless forms a thread that runs through the whole section, making sense of its otherwise disjointed and rather disorienting statements. The cohesive ties that reflect this thematic emphasis are largely lexical, and together participate in typical ancient royal terminology.

⁴⁷ Cf. Hos 5:13–6:3. The unburied corpse is a well-attested curse in the ancient world, e.g. Jer 34:20; Deut 28:26 (Hillers, *Treaty-Curses*, 68–69).

3.3. Unit 3 (26:20–21)

לך עמי בא בחדריך	²⁰ Come, my people, go into your inner rooms
וסגר דלת ⁴⁸ בעדך	and close your doors behind you.
חבי כמעט רגע עד יעבור זעם	Hide for a little while until the wrath passes over.
כי הנה יהוה יצא ממקומו	²¹ Because, look, YHWH is about to come out from his place
לפקד עון ישב הארץ עליו	to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their sin;
וגלתה הארץ את דמיה	and the earth will uncover its bloodshed,
ולא תכסה עוד על הרוגיה	and will no longer conceal its slain.

This concluding exhortation is not part of the prayer (since it addresses the community as עמי [*my people*], but is a transition back to prophetic announcement. The unit consists of a series of four imperatives (v. 20) and their basis (v. 21). The opening imperative marks a disjunction from the communal prayer, followed with a vocative of direct address to "my people." Normally the expression "my people" is spoken by YHWH, but in this case it seems more likely that of the prophetic speaker, since YHWH is spoken of in the third person in the immediate context (for YHWH is coming out. . .).⁴⁹ Each of the exhortations, given in quick succession, relate to the avoidance of the coming divine judgment. The hiding location is specified using household imagery—inner rooms and doors.⁵⁰ This verse does not appear to be a

⁴⁸ The *qere* is a singular noun, your door. I have maintained the pl. *kethiv*, since it is supported by 1QISa^a (דלתך).

⁴⁹ The term "my people" in the book of Isaiah tends to be used with an affectionate tone, whereas the term "this people" usually occurs in negatively-charged contexts with a distancing effect (e.g. Isa 6:9, 10; 8:6, 11; 28:14).

⁵⁰ There is some question regarding the sense of the term חדר (*inner room*), since it can refer to both private domestic space and to rooms in a tomb (note that חדר is to be distinguished from קבר, which is a more generic word for a burial place).

Inscriptional evidence uses the term חדר in reference to burial chambers. One Judean tomb reads, "[Belonging?] to Ephai, son of Nethaniah (is) this chamber [(h) *hdr* . *hzh*]" (*Hebrew Inscriptions: Texts from the Biblical Period of the Monarchy with Concordance*, ed. F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp et al. [London: Yale University Press, 2005], 406). A second inscription from a Kidron Valley necropolis uses the word, carved into a recessed panel in the tomb: "The room at the side of the burial chamber [*hdr*]" (*Hebrew Inscriptions*, 510). In the Hebrew Bible (38 occurrences), the term "implies the concepts of darkness, seclusion, secrecy, and safety" (Price, *NIDOTTE* vol. 2, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren [Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997], 29). See 1 Kgs 20:30; 22:25 (par. 2 Chr 18:24); 2 Kgs 9:1; 11:2 (par. 2 Chr 22:11). The noun can be in construct with another noun for specification (e.g. "the inner room of your lying down" = *bedroom*). Although the noun can refer to Sheol or the grave (e.g. Prov 7:27; 1QH 10:34) (*NIDOTTE* 2: 30), it more often refers to a domestic place, especially in collocation with the mundane term for a household door (דלת), so this is likely the sense in Isa 26:20.

direct citation of any particular text, but it does evoke both the closing door of the ark (Gen 7:16) and movement of God's wrath in the Passover (Exod 12:12, 23).⁵¹

3.4. Cohesion in Section 3 The Prayer of Isaiah 26:7–21

The prayer as a whole wrestles with the tension between the righteous "judgments" of God, and the apparent lack of order in the experience of the speaking community. The prayer begins by confessing allegiance to the ordered rule of YHWH as a foundation for the subsequent lament, petition, and ultimately the confessions of hope within the prayer. By reflecting the order that YHWH has instituted for the world, the gnomic statements establish a basis on which to call YHWH to act in accordance with his justice (cf. Abraham's appeal mentioned at the beginning of this chapter).

The whole section is characterised by second-person direct address to YHWH (using verbal conjugation, personal pronouns, and vocative use of the divine name), beginning with the second clause of the prayer using a second-person verb with YHWH as its implied subject (v. 7). Similarly, the speaker uses the first-person voice, alternating between singular and plural. As Van Wieringen has convincingly argued, this alternation is, at least in part, because the singular speaker identifies as part of the "we" group.⁵² This consistency in person creates referential cohesion across the entire section, and also, by nature of its first/second-person specificity, contributes to the section's petitionary quality.

⁵¹ Genesis 7:16 does not explicitly mention the doors of the ark, but does use a similar verbal expression for "closing over" (ויסגר יהוה בעדו). The exodus account (e.g. Exod 12:23) uses two different verbs for the movement of divine wrath: passing over (פסח, of the Israelites), and passing through (עבר, of the Egyptians).

⁵² Van Wieringen, "I and 'We'," 239–65.

An instance of lexical repetition in this section is the negative particle בל.⁵³ Compared to some other negative particles, the word is relatively uncommon in biblical Hebrew and occurs only in poetic texts (about 60x).⁵⁴ It is noteworthy, therefore, that the particle occurs seven times within the prayer, in vv. 10 (3x), 14 (2x), and 18 (2x).⁵⁵ Tromp observed that the particle tends to occur in groups in Hebrew and Ugaritic, a tendency shown in the prayer.⁵⁶

A lexical feature which ties this gnomic introduction to the rest of the prayer is its reference to the *name* and *memory* of YHWH. This word pairing, as discussed above, can be used in reference to the veneration of royalty. The noun זכר is used only twice in the book of Isaiah, both times in this prayer section: 26:8, 14. This suggests that the term is central to the message of this text. In addition to the repetition of this particular noun, the prayer uses a variety of related terms: שם (vv. 8,

⁵³ The part of speech of בל has been variously identified—as a particle (T. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew* [Leiden: Brill, 1985], 125), an adverb, and a particle which functions like a conjunction (N. J. Tromp, "The Hebrew Particle בל," *OtSt* 21 [1981], 284). The particle normally functions adverbially as a negation, roughly synonymous with the negative particles לו and אל. However, Tromp notes that when equivalent to אל, the particle is followed by *yiqtol*, and when equivalent to לו, it can be followed by either *qatal* or *yiqtol* ("Hebrew Particle בל" (see pp. 285, 287). Some have even argued that the particle can have an asseverative function (C.F. Whitley, "The Positive Force of the Hebrew Particle בל," *ZAW* 84 [1972: 213–19]. This conclusion is based in part on the cognate Ugaritic term *bl*, which according to Whitley, can convey both a negative and an emphatic sense. Besides arguing for the asseverative use of the the Heb. particle in several instances (Ps 10:15; 16:2; 49:13; Prov 14:7; Isa 26:18; 40:24; 44:8b), he also cites several instances of the particle כל, which he argues is a scribal error for בל. While this is possible, I find it unlikely that scribes would misunderstand the particle, given its increased use in rabbinic literature (cf. Jacobus A. Naudé and Gary A. Rendsburg, who observe its frequency in rewritten biblical prohibitions ["Negation: Pre-Modern Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*]).

⁵⁴ Tromp, "Particle בל," p. 277. Tromp mentions counts as low as 50 and high as 69; he counts 68 occurrences. Other than a single occurrence in Hosea (7:1; 9:16[?]), Job, and 1 Chronicles (16:30), the word is found only in Isaiah, Psalms, and Proverbs.

⁵⁵ Besides its use in poetry, Noegel has argued that the particle בל is one of several indications of a northern provenance for Isaiah 26. He finds its use in various "northern" texts (e.g. Hos 7:2, "northern" psalms, Proverbs, and Job) and its widespread use in Phoenician and Ugaritic to point towards its appearance in northern dialect (Noegel, "Dialect and Politics," 185.). For the defence of the northern provenance of these books, see Rendsburg, *Linguistic Evidence*, 64–64, 103.

⁵⁶ Tromp, "Particle בל," p. 280. He cites some examples of the Ugaritic cognate *bal* occurring four times in a series of two, three times in a triple repetition, and twice in a chain of four occurrences. See Isaiah 33 for another grouping of the particle בל (vv. 20 [3x], 21, 23 [2x], and 24).

13), זכר (*hiph.* בִּזְכֹּר (v. 13), all of which can be used in perpetuating the memory of a king. Not only is the name and memory of YHWH praised in the prayer (e.g. it is the "desire of the soul"), but it is contrasted with that of the (appropriately anonymous) rival masters, whose name and memory will disappear forever as a result of YHWH's action (v. 14).⁵⁷ Thus, even this outlying gnomic preface fits into the discourse by establishing the basis for royal justice, upon which the petition, lament, and expressions of trust are built.

4. Cohesion in Movement 2—Isaiah 25:6–26:21

As the second iteration in the cycle of prophetic announcement and response, Movement 2 makes up the heart of the discourse. This middle section develops the announcement of YHWH's reign by describing the wonderful things that he will do for his people, including destroying *Mot*, wiping away their tears, and taking away their shame. However, unlike the first movement of the composition, this one introduces the element of lament. The coming "day" of victory, comfort, and tearlessness is not yet a reality. This negative point is captured well by the contrast between the open gates of the eschatological "strong city" (26:1) and the prophetic exhortation to "close your doors behind you" in preparation for the impending disaster (26:2).⁵⁸

The first collection of cohesive ties, which holds a prominent place in the surface structure of the movement, obtains in the referential relationship between two demonstrative (or *deictic*) adjectives and their referents. The first demonstrative is

⁵⁷ The loss of name and memory is stock ancient curse phraseology. E.g. Ps 9:7 [6]; 34:17 [16]; 109:13, 15; Job 18:17. The loss of memory is also associated with the dead in general (Ecc 9:5; Ps 6:6 [5] אֵין בְּמוֹת זִכְרָךְ, *there is no remembrance of you in death*).

⁵⁸ Polaski, "Politics of Prayer," 363.

temporal, (on *that* day), and the second is locative (on *this* mountain); as deictics, they both point to a known referent, in this case to the known time and place of eschatological restoration (introduced in ch. 24). In this movement, the grand eschatological banquet (and accompanying song of praise and defeat of Moab) happens on *this* mountain (= Zion). Similarly, the victorious song of praise, though geographically broadened to the land of Judah, is also situated in the same future time by its referential tie to the already-mentioned "day." Therefore, on the basis of these referential ties, 25:6–26:6 emerges as both temporally and spatially located in the announced coming "day."⁵⁹

Within this future setting is substantial lexical repetition in the two descriptions of the enemy's defeat. The first of these, which occurs as a sort of "negative" counterpart to YHWH's mountain banquet, announces the punishment of Moab, the paradigmatic enemy of God's people, by piling up roughly synonymous terms for physical lowness: *lay low*, *bring down*, *ground*, *dust*. These same terms are taken up again in the immediately following song of praise to YHWH. Note the sustained verbal repetition (repeated words in parentheses):

And *he will lay low* (שפל) [Moab's] pride with the skill of his hands.
 And the high fortifications of your walls *he has brought down* (שחח),
he has laid low (שפל), *cast* (נגע) *to the ground* (ארץ), *to the dust* (עד עפר).
 (Isa 25:11b–12)

- -
 For *he has brought down* (שחח) the inhabitants of the heights, the lofty city.
He has laid them low (שפל), *he has lowered it* (שפל) *to the ground* (ארץ).
He has cast it (נגע) *to the dust* (עד עפר).
 (Isa 26:5–6)

In addition to these repeated lexemes, the picture of trampling is consistent: both

⁵⁹ Cf. Chapter 9 for how the song of 26:1–6 relates to the book's opening oracle about Jerusalem (Isa 1:21, 26).

Moab and the unnamed "lofty" city will be trampled (25:10b; 26:6).⁶⁰ And, following the thematic emphasis of the book, both Moab and this unnamed city of song are "lofty": Moab's lofty fortifications (מבצר משגב, Isa 25:12) and the lofty city (קריה נשגבה) are both lowered. The lowering language used for the enemy contrasts with the resurrection of God's people. Whereas the prideful will be trampled into the dust (25:12; 26:5–6), the people of YHWH who "dwell in the dust" will be raised, awoken, and sing for joy (26:19).

There are two important details which differentiate these pronouncements of judgment: 1) the first names the enemy (Moab), whereas the second features an unnamed one; 2) the first comes from the mouth of the prophet and projects the event into the future, whereas the second comes from the mouths of the future restored people of God and reflects on the event in the past. The effect of this lexical repetition, besides simply emphasising the fate of God's enemies (the high brought low), is to stress the certain outcome of YHWH's promise.⁶¹ Almost as soon as the prophecy is spoken in the prophetic voice, a group of unnamed eschatological worshipers appears praising YHWH for his accomplishment of the promise. The implicit claim in this song of praise (Isa 26:1–6) is a theological one, namely that YHWH's word through the prophetic is completely reliable.

This theological claim that emerges from the juxtaposition of prophetic announcement and human response, namely "YHWH is trustworthy," finds support in

⁶⁰ Notice the three-fold poetic repetition in the mention of the feet of the underprivileged in 26:6. The second and third of these elides the verb ("trample"), which gives cohesion to this line on a micro-level. The effect is that the feet of the poor and the footsteps of the needy have the same referent.

⁶¹ The lowering of national enemies, like the loss of name and memory, is stock language in ancient political polemics. A similar use in the Hebrew Bible is Mic 7:10, in which the enemy who once taunted the people of YHWH will be trampled "like mire in the streets (כטיט חוצות)."

the movement's repeated use of various terms associated with trust.⁶² These terms span every section of the movement. The presumed banquet attendees profess twice in the embedded song of 25:9 that they have *waited* on YHWH (25:9 [2x]). The longer song of 26:1–6 is at once a song of praise and a song of trust. It describes the double-*shalom* of the dependent individual who trusts in YHWH. Thus in the future day of victory, part of the reason for praise will be that God has "made good" on his word.

This theme of trust continues into the final part of the movement. The entirety of the prayer addresses the problem that, though the worshipping community *waits* on YHWH (26:8), he has not yet made good on his word. Though the prophetic perspective initially moves from announcement to fulfilment with no intervening text or time, the prophetic prayer beginning in 26:7 acknowledges that appearances indicate a long and painful interval between announcement and fulfilment, an interval in which others compete for the community's allegiance (e.g. "other masters"). Therefore, this interwoven theme of "trust" (using these various terms from the semantic field of relational dependance) proves to be an important element in the literary cohesion within Movement 2.

By transitioning from song to prayer without clear disjunction, the text invites its readers to imagine themselves as the speakers of both sections: at once rejoicing in the future hope and lamenting at the present reality. For the poet, this future is as certain as the past. Supporting the connection between the future song and present prayer are cataphoric lexical-cohesive ties from the wisdom unit to the song. Recall

⁶² Redditt observes that the various sections within ch. 26 "are united by the common theme of trust" ("Isaiah 26," *RevExp* 88 [1991]: 195). Redditt also finds that we simply cannot know the historical context for ch. 26, so he treats it more generally as a "celebration of God's ability to deliver his people in any event" (195).

the defining characteristics of the future "strong" city of song (26:1) are *righteousness* (גוי צדיק) and *trust* (בטח) –both themes that the following wisdom section echoes: צדיק/צדק (noun and adjective) occur in 26:7 (2x), 9, and 10; and the "trust" term קוה (*to wait for*) occurs in 26:8. The communal prayer is itself an actualisation of "trust."

Finally, the order of these three sections is important. The prophetic announcement is so wonderful, and the future praise is so jubilant, which inevitably casts a dark shadow on the time before "that day" arrives. When the community, in fact, does *not* have a strong city to celebrate, the lamenting prayer follows. The compositional ordering of Movement 2 reflects a struggle to worship—it promises a future so wonderful that only the language of metaphor suffices, and expresses hope that YHWH will bring about this future restoration. In short, Movement 2 elaborates on the prophetic hope of a future finally set right, and it gives voice to those who anticipate the reign of YHWH. The prophetic claim is that Israel's divine monarch, who demands justice and righteousness, is himself just and righteous and will restore his people.

CHAPTER 7

MOVEMENT 3 (ISAIAH 27:1–13)

1. Introduction

In a dramatic conclusion to Isa 24–27, the third movement (27:1–13) recapitulates two opposing eschatological fates: the defeat of Leviathan and the restoration of YHWH's vineyard Israel. An unexpected question (v. 7), however, breaks up this otherwise triumphant prophetic announcement by directing attention away from the ideal future towards the reality of the present. This movement continues the themes of the victory of YHWH and eschatological judgment, but also responds to the problem of YHWH's harshness toward his own people.

2. Structure and Genre

Based on the placement of the phrase *ביום ההוא* in vv. 1, 2, 12, and 13, this final movement follows the *announcement-response* pattern of the previous two movements, but with a slight modification. Whereas Movements 1 and 2 open with a prophetic *announcement* (24:1–23; 25:6–12) and close with a hymnic (and supplicatory) *response* (25:1–5; 26:1–6, 7–21), Movement 3 adds one final announcement (27:12–13). Also unlike the prior movements, the response section of Movement 3 does not contain a hymn, but rather an explanation of an implicit challenge. The resulting structure is a "dialogical" response section (vv. 7–11) sandwiched between two prophetic announcement sections (vv. 1–6, 12–13).

Section 1—Slain Leviathan and Revived Vineyard (27:1–6)	Announcement
Unit 1 (27:1)	
Unit 2 (27:2–6)	
Section 2—Expulsion (27:7–11)	Response
Unit 1 (27:7–9)	
Unit 2 (27:10–11)	
Section 3—The Gatherings (27:12–13)	Announcement

There is significant discussion regarding the genre of the "new song of the vineyard" (vv. 2–6), but it must suffice here to point out its designation as something which is sung (ענו לה, *sing about her!*) and its allusion to the song of Isa 5:1–7, which is called a love song (5:1, שירת דודי).¹ Unlike the hymns of Isa 24–27, this song is sung by YHWH himself.

3. Section 1 (27:1–6)—A New Created Order

3.1. Unit 1 (27:1)

ביום ההוא יפקד יהוה בחרבו הקשה והגדולה והחזקה על לויתן נחש ברח ועל לויתן נחש עקלתון והרג את התנין אשר בים	¹ On that day, YHWH will punish— with his harsh, great, and strong sword —Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the snake which is in the sea.
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This verse returns to eschatological announcement (prefaced again with the phrase ביום ההוא) by depicting YHWH as a mighty slayer of the chaos creature Leviathan.² The

¹ Pace Luis Alonso-Schökel, who argues that the feminine suffixes in the song carry erotic overtones. This reading, however, depends on an unjustified emendation in 27:3 (אשקנה [*I will water it*] to a form of the root נשק [*to kiss*], "Con frecuencia yo la besaba"), as well as on an idiosyncratic understanding of the phrase יפקד עליה [also in 27:3] as a romantic tryst. Schökel suggests that the song was originally a "canción profana," which was eventually augmented for religious purposes ("La canción de la viña: Is. 27, 2–5," *EstEcl* 34 [1960], 767–74).

² The first occurrence of ביום ההוא likewise announced YHWH's punishment of enemy powers (24:21). The second and third occurrences of the phrase are in the context of the eschatological

statement is syntactically straightforward with YHWH as the subject of two verbs—*yiqtol* יפקד and *w^eqatal* והרג. YHWH's sword is described with three related adjectives—קשה (*harsh*), גדולה (*great*), and חזקה (*strong*)—which correspond to the thrice-named foe. YHWH is the only active agent in this unit, leaving Leviathan as an inert object of divine action.

The three epithets for the beast in 27:1 all reference its serpentine quality, twice the term נחש (*serpent*) and once תנין (*snake*), which earlier scholarship typically identified as three separate creatures.³ These were often identified as three different political powers.⁴ However, most now agree that these designations are poetic restatements of a single entity, connected by an epexegetical *wāw*.⁵ This stylistic repetition is seen in both Hebrew and Ugaritic poetry, in particular in passages related to Leviathan and the sea.⁶ The psalms speak of YHWH's power over the sea in similar terms:

ואלהים מלכי מקדם	For God is my king from ages past,
פעל ישועות בקרב הארץ	accomplishing salvation in the midst of the earth.
אתה פוררת בעוז ים	You split open the <i>sea</i> by your might,
שברת ראשי תנינים על המים	you broke the heads of the <i>serpents</i> in the waters.
אתה רצצת ראשי לויתן	You smashed the heads of <i>Leviathan</i> .
	(Ps 74:13–14)

salvation of his people (25:9; 26:1).

³ Skinner, *Prophet Isaiah*, 212.

⁴ E.g. Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and especially Egypt (cf. the association of pharaoh with the *serpent* [תנין] in the *sea/waters* [ים/מים] in Isa 51:9; Ezek 29:3; 32:2; Ps 74:13). Other interpretations of the beasts include three different groups within Sennacherib's army (Rabbi Moses Hakkohen, mentioned by Ibn Ezra [Friedländer, *Commentary of Ibn Ezra*, 122]); and constellations (Rudolf Smend, "Anmerkungen zu Jes. 24–27," *ZAW* 4 [1884], 213; C.F. Burney, "The Three Serpents of Isaiah XXVII 1," *JTS* [1910], 443–47).

⁵ John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 142; cf. Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 578.

⁶ Day, "God and Leviathan in Isaiah 27:1," *BSac* 155 (1998), 428–29. J. A. Emerton's hypothesis to explain the etymological differences between Hebrew *leviathan* and Ugaritic *ltn* is plausible: both words derive from a longer form **liwyatānu*, from which Heb. simply dropped the case ending ("Leviathan and *LTN*: The Vocalization of the Ugaritic Word for the Dragon," *VT* [1982], 327–31).

An even closer literary parallel is from the Baal Cycle, which features the repeated naming of the serpentine chaos creature, Litan, as well as cognate adjectives *brḥ* (wriggling)⁷ and *'qltn* (writhing):

Though you smote Litan (*ltn*) the wriggling serpent (*bṭn brḥ*),
finished off the writhing serpent (*bṭn 'qltn*),
Encircler-with-seven-heads . . .⁸
(KTU 1.5 i 1–2 // 28–29)

As seen in this example, the Ugaritic poetic convention is to give several epithets for the same referent, including "Litan," "writhing serpent," and "encircler-with-seven-heads" (elsewhere also Sea [*ym*], River [*nhr*], and Dragon [*tnn*]). These citations illustrate the poetic convention (at least in the Hebrew Bible and Baal Cycle) of assigning Leviathan multiple names.

To comment on the identity of Leviathan in Isa 27:1, the creature appears only here in Isa 24–27, though, along with its cognates, it is mentioned several other times in the Hebrew Bible.⁹ It does not have a consistent referent, but is used in reference to political powers,¹⁰ mythical enemies vanquished by YHWH's salvific acts (Isa 51:9; Ps 74:13–14), or creatures under the control of God (Job 26:13; Ps 104:25–26). Whatever the extent to which this ancient figure has been "demythologised" in the Hebrew Bible, the biblical texts consistently portray YHWH as creator and master over Leviathan and other chaos creatures (e.g. Gen 1:21 [הַתַּיִם הַגְּדֹלִים]; Job 40:25).

⁷ This term is likely related to Hebrew ברה. The sense should be determined by the parallel *'qltn* (N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 2nd ed. [London: Sheffield Academic, 2002], 115).

⁸ Translation (= CTA 5.I.1–2) from Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 115. The same epithet for Yam also occurs in KTU 1.3 iii 40–42 (=CTA 3.IIID.37–9).

⁹ In the Hebrew Bible, Leviathan appears in Isa 27:1; Ps 74:13–15; 104:26; Job 3:8; 40:25–41:26 (Eng. 41:1–34). Barkers adds to this list Job 26:13, since it refers to the "fleeing serpent" (*Isaiah's Kingship Polemic*, 169).

¹⁰ The related term תנין can refer to Babylon (Jer 51:34), Egypt (Ezek 29:3; 32:2); and רהב refers to Egypt in Isa 30:7.

The ancient Near Eastern mythology of the watery chaos creature generally involves a deity who, at the creation of the world, defeats the chaos creature and rises to power in the divine pantheon.¹¹ The best known example is the Babylonian epic of Marduk's defeat of Tiamat (and son Kingu, who is a serpentine chaos creature). As mentioned above, Baal also defeats Litan (*ltn*) in the Ugaritic mythology.¹² In widespread Near Eastern tradition, this creature represents opposition to the chief deity by actively seeking to prevent the establishment of the cosmic abode.¹³ The creature is not a mere political foe, but an archenemy, a representation of chaos, slain by YHWH in Isa 27:1 as part of his reordering, even recreation, of the cosmos as he initiates his eschatological dominion.

Within Isa 24–27, Leviathan functions as a mythical symbol for chaos, which YHWH destroys in the act of re-creation. Although scholars have proposed several historical enemies, including Tyre,¹⁴ Egypt, and Babylon, the cosmic dimensions of both the Leviathan motif and the content elsewhere in Isa 24–27 suggest that the serpentine reference here is trans-national, referring to any power of chaos that opposes YHWH's rule.¹⁵ Unlike some texts (e.g. Isa 30:7 and Egypt), there is no political identifying feature that would connect Leviathan with a nation, and the

¹¹ Day, "God and Leviathan," 425.

¹² There are other resonances between Isa 24–27 and the Ugaritic Baal Myth. The latter describes a contest between Baal and Mot (*KTU* 1.5), provoked by Mot's resentment that he was not invited to Baal's royal banquet. In retaliation, Mot threatens to devour Baal with his insatiable appetite (*KTU* 1.5 i 5–20). Perhaps YHWH's royal feast (Isa 25:6–8) evokes this scene, though instead of Mot devouring YHWH, the reverse happens. The context of the Litan passage is Mot disparaging Baal's past victory over Litan as meaningless: "Though you smote [Litan the wr]iggling [serpent], finished off [the writhing serpent], Encircler-[with-seven-heads] . . . [I shall devour (you)]" (trans. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 120).

¹³ Barker, *Isaiah's Kingship Polemic*, 169.

¹⁴ Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, 410. Goulder suggests that 27:1 refers to two rivers associated with political powers in both Mesopotamia and Phoenicia (*Isaiah as Liturgy*, 84–5).

¹⁵ Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 218; Oswalt states that Isa 27:1 is "saying the same thing . . . as 24:21–23, although in different words" (*Book of Isaiah*, 491).

eschatological timeframe also suggests a foe that is larger than any single historical enemy. Thus, the statement dramatises (perhaps even "re-mythologises") the ultimate fate of all of God's enemies.

3.2. Unit 2 (27:2–6)

ביום ההוא	² On that day,
כרם חמד ¹⁶ ענו לה	A beautiful vineyard, sing about it!
אני יהוה נצרה	³ I, YHWH, am its keeper;
לרגעים אשקנה	at every moment I water it.
פן יפקד ¹⁷ עליה	Lest anyone punish it,
לילה ויום אצרנה	night and day I protect it.
חמה אין לי	⁴ I have no wrath.
מי יתנני שמיר שית	O that there were thorny thistles!
במלחמה אפשרה בה ¹⁸	In battle, I would march into it;
אציתנה יחד	I would burn them up in a moment.
או יחזק במעוזי	⁵ Or let him take hold of my protection;
יעשה שלום לי	let him make peace with me;
שלום יעשה לי	peace let him make with me.
הבאים ישרש יעקב	⁶ In the coming [days], Jacob will take root,
יציץ ופרח ישראל	and Israel will bloom and send out shoots,
ומלאו פני תבל תנובה	and they will fill the face of the world with fruit.

This unit introduces a beautiful vineyard, again using the temporal expression ביום ההוא, which places these verses in the same future time as the other eschatological portions of Isa 24–27. It is held together by the first person speech of YHWH as well as sustained (metaphorical) agricultural imagery.¹⁹

¹⁶ Some witnesses read חמר (*wine*), and 1QIsa^a reads חומר, the meaning of which is unclear. The versions strongly support the MT reading.

¹⁷ Because the verb (יפקד) has no explicit subject, it is best translated as an impersonal. This use of a 3s verb is not infrequent; cf. Kroeze, "Alternatives for the Nominative in Biblical Hebrew," 40; GKC, 459. There is no need to reposit MT to *nip'al* (יפקד), especially given this requires deleting the object (עליה).

¹⁸ There is a single attestation of the nominal form from פשע (*step*, 1Sam 20:3). Depending on the syntax or the associated verbal root, the *b*-preposition can function any number of ways (e.g. locative [*in*], temporal [*when*, *in*], adversative [*against*], accompaniment [*with*], means [*through*, *by means of*]). The semantics of verb + preposition + object groupings are not predictable and must be analysed on the basis of usage, for which data is lacking for *hapax legomena*. Polaski rightly deems the sense of the preposition here "a matter of almost free supposition" (*Authorizing an End*, 338).

¹⁹ Though the original inclusion of v. 6 is debated on diachronic grounds, it is considered part of the present unit given its continuation of the vineyard metaphor and given the new section beginning at v. 7. Some cite the separate introductory marker in v. 6 (הבאים). Wildberger is exceptional in his

There are several textual difficulties in the passage, particularly in regards to the pronominal referents.²⁰ Although the grammatical gender of the noun כרם (*vineyard*) is masculine, the song appears to refer to the vineyard with feminine pronouns (27:2, 3, 4).²¹ Though some see in these feminine forms an erotic overtone, it seems most likely that the use of feminine pronouns signals that the actual referent of the noun כרם is not simply a place for growing grapes, which would use masculine pronouns, but a nation.²² However, if this referent is maintained throughout the song, then the final line of v. 4 appears to describe YHWH marching into and setting fire to his own vineyard. Although this reading is grammatically possible, the final pronominal suffix of v. 4 (אציתנה) may also be neuter, rather than feminine, in gender. As such, its antecedent is the collective thorns and thistles (neuter).²³ The picture of YHWH burning thorns is more contextually appropriate than him burning the vineyard itself. And the effect of the impersonal construction of v. 3 is to deflect rhetorical emphasis away from any particular identity of the subject and instead toward the verbal action: lest *anyone* punish her.

The expression מִי יִתֵּן (*O that . . .*) has prompted discussion, since its normal desiderative function seems a bit out of place in Isa 27:4. If the phrase expresses desire, why would YHWH wish for thistles to battle? Benjamin Johnson argues instead

reading of v. 6 as a superscription for what follows (*Isaiah 13–27*, 590). Duhm considered v. 6 a “postscript” (*Nachsatz*) (*Jesaia*, 161).

²⁰ Clements states that “the textual problems and difficulties of Isaiah 27:2–5 prevent a very full and clear comparison between the two songs” (“Unity of the Book of Isaiah,” 122).

²¹ Johnson, “Thorns and Thistles,” 109–10, lists several possibilities to explain the fem. pronoun, including the tenor of the metaphor, namely אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל. He notes the tendency of older commentators to appeal to textual emendation to alleviate such perceived problems (e.g. E. Robertson, “Isaiah XXVII 2–6,” *ZAW* 47 [1929]). Henk Leene similarly cites personification as YHWH's beloved to explain the feminine pronouns, though neither vineyard song has erotic overtones as some have suggested (“Isaiah 27:7–9 as a Bridge between Vineyard and City,” in *Studies in Isaiah 24–27*, 209).

²² Pace Schökel, “La canción de la viña,” 767–74.

²³ Leene, “Isaiah 27:7–9 as a Bridge,” 213. Duhm also takes these as neuter (*Jesaia*, 161).

for a non-desiderative (interrogative) sense and posits intentional ambiguity within the song.²⁴ In this view, the enemy of v. 3 is anyone who tries to harm the vineyard, whether internal or external. Similarly, Clements reads the entire song as a threat, only becoming a promise with the later addition of v. 6. While v. 5 does offer a choice to the hypothetical enemy of the vineyard, the use of the expression *מי יתן* in the Hebrew Bible strongly suggests a desiderative sense. The phrase consistently functions as an idiom for expressing a wish or desire, not a question.²⁵ Muraoka notes that the phrase is “fossilized” in Hebrew, though Greek renderings seem to handle the expression with varying degrees of finesse.²⁶ The cohortative verbs that follow the idiom are consistent with a desiderative expression.²⁷

It is widely agreed that this “new vineyard song” of Isa 27:2–6 demonstrates a literary relationship with Isa 5:1–7, the “Song of the Vineyard.” By telling the story of YHWH’s failed grape harvest as a tragic lyric parable, the earlier song accuses Judah of unfaithfulness to YHWH and pronounces judgment. Extensive lexical and thematic similarities link the two vineyard songs, which both demonstrate lexical cohesion

²⁴ Johnson, “‘Whoever Gives Me Thorns and Thistles’: Rhetorical Ambiguity and the Use of *מי יתן* in Isaiah 27.2–6,” *JSOT* 36 (2011): 105–26.

²⁵ Exod 16:3; Num 11:29; Deut 5:29; 28:67 (x2); Judg 9:29; 2Sam 19:1; Isa 27:4; Jer 8:23; 9:1; Ps 14:7; 53:7; 55:7; Job 6:8; 11:5; 13:5; 14:4, 13; 19:23 (x2); 23:3; 29:2; 31:31, 35; Song 8:1. Within this list, the only clear exception to the idiomatic usage is Job 14:4. To be sure, *מי* on its own can function as an indefinite pronoun, usually as a nominative at the head of a relative clause (see Waltke/O’Connor, *Syntax*, 18.2e; Judg 7:3; Exod 32:26; Exod 24:14; Hos 14:10). However, the interrogative *מי* is also used in a variety of idioms, notably with the verbs *ידע* (*who knows*, expressing doubt or possibility) and, as here, *נתן* (expressing a desire, often unrealised) (Cf. *GKC* §108f, 151a).

²⁶ T. Muraoka, “How to Analyse and Translate the Idiomatic Phrase *מי יתן*,” *BIOSCS* 33 (2000), 52, 47. The Old Greek rendering of Isa 27:4 is remarkable but cannot be used as a reliable interpretive aid for the Hebrew. This is because the Greek rendering of the song, along with much of the rest of chs. 24–27, is a particularly free translation. Cf. 27:4b, *τίς με θήσει φυλάσσειν καλύμην ἐν ἀγρῷ*; (*Who will set me to watch stubble in a field?* [NETS]).

²⁷ Cohortatives can be used in conditional sentences (in either the protasis or the apodosis). In Isa 27:4, they appear in the apodosis of an implicit conditional statement. See Judg 9:29; Ps 55:7; Jb 23:4 (*GKC* §108f). Though the phrase has the form of an interrogative (using *מי*), it functions as an exclamation of a wish, which is especially frequent with *מי יתן* (lit. *who gives . . . ?*) (*GKC* §151a, b). An illustrative example is Jer 9:1[2]—*מי יתני במדבר מלון ארחים ואעזבה את עמי*—(*Oh, that I had [מי יתני] in the wilderness a travelers’ lodge, so that I might leave [cohort.] my people*).

centred around agricultural terminology.²⁸ First, both passages are presented as songs (שיר [Isa 5:1, cohort.] and ענה [in 27:2, impv.]). Second, both passages share the vineyard (כרם) as metaphor for God's people—*the house of Israel // the men of Judah* (5:7), and *Jacob // Israel* (27:6).²⁹ YHWH is the caretaker of the vineyard in both cases. Third, both passages mention irrigation—withheld in 5:6, but provided attentively in 27:3. Fourth, both describe YHWH's protection of the vineyard—again withheld in 5:5–6, but provided attentively in 27:3. Fifth, both passages speak of thorns and thistles (שמיר ושיח), which will overtake the old vineyard (5:6) but are absent or incinerated from the new one (27:4). And finally, both passages assess the productivity of the vineyard—in the first case yielding only putrid fruit (5:2, symbolising behaviour described as violent (משפח and צעקה, v. 7), and in the second producing fruit that fills the whole earth (27:6). Given the allusion to the first Song of the Vineyard, when this unit mentions a "beautiful vineyard," it evokes an entire narrative of an unfaithful and judged people.

3.3. Cohesion in Section 1

A New Creation

These two eschatological images—Leviathan's final defeat and Israel's final fruitfulness use different motifs (i.e. the vanquished chaos creature and Israel as vineyard), and do not show any obvious cohesive ties apart from their shared eschatological setting. Many share the judgment that "there is nothing in the larger

²⁸ This literary correspondence is well-documented. Along with most commentaries, see Polaski, *Authorizing an End*, 331–33; J. Willis, "Yahweh Regenerates His Vineyard: Isaiah 27," in *Formation*, 204; K. Nielsen, *There Is Hope for a Tree: The Tree as Metaphor in Isaiah*, JSOTSup 65 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 185.

²⁹ Pace M. Chaney, who argues that the Song of the Vineyard was originally addressed only to the ruling class of Jerusalem ("Whose Sour Grapes? The Addressees of Isaiah 5:1–7 in the Light of Political Economy," *Semeia* 87 [1999]).

context to lead one to expect a specific mention of Leviathan [in 27:1]."³⁰

Besides the phrase "on that day" and YHWH as actor, the only shared vocabulary between the units is the verbal root פקד. The repetition of this term highlights the pattern of dualistic contrast already seen in the composition. The announcement which opens Movement 2 (25:6–12) features the same opposing fates (restoration or defeat). A similar dualistic contrast emerges in this section, in which YHWH punishes (יפקד) the enemy (27:1) but protects Israel from punishment (פן יפקד) (עליה) (27:3). The two images of v. 1 and vv. 2–6, therefore, continue the composition's pattern of highlighting the stark eschatological distinction between the two groups.³¹ Moreover, *punishment* in Isa 27:1 immediately follows the refrain in 26:21 that YHWH is about to *punish* the inhabitants of the earth (לפקד עון ישב הארץ) (עליה), with the result that both land and sea (or human and non-human, or historical and cosmic) enemies are vanquished.³² The effect of the root פקד repeated in close proximity is to underscore YHWH's total rule, over earthly and mythological adversaries.

The second thematic detail which unites these units is the theme of creation, in effect describing an eschatological re-creation. It was argued above that Isa 27:1, in addition to its polemical feel, evokes creation mythology in which the deity defeats a chaos creature in the act of making the world. Similarly, the new song of the vineyard, in reversing the first song of the vineyard (Isa 5), also presents the

³⁰ Errol McGuire, "Yahweh and Leviathan: An Exegesis of Isaiah 27:1," *ResQ* 13.3 (1970), 173.

³¹ This eschatological contrast is seen frequently in the prophets, e.g. Joel 3:18–19, "And on that day [והיה ביום ההוא], the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah will flow with water . . . [but] Egypt will become a desolation, and Edom will become a desolated wilderness, because of violence against the Judahites."

³² McGuire, "Yahweh and Leviathan," 173.

revivification of the vineyard as a new creative act of God. It does this by using language associated with the language of the Gen 1 creation account, in which God's blessing to humankind is the command to "be fruitful (פרו) and numerous, and fill the earth (ומלאו את הארץ), and bring it under your control."³³ Although Isa 27:6 does not directly quote the Genesis "creation mandate," this botanical image nonetheless shares distinct vocabulary with the biblical creation narrative and suggests a vision of a renewed creation. In sum, these two very different eschatological visions—Leviathan slain and vineyard Israel restored—both draw on creation language and motifs, thereby portraying "that day" in the future in terms of a new creative act of God.

4. Section 2 (27:7–11)—A People without Knowledge

4.1. Unit 1 (27:7–9)

הכמכת מכהו הכהו	⁷ With a blow like his striker's has he struck him?
אם ³⁴ כהרג הרגיו ³⁵ הרג	Or like the slaughter of those slain by him has he slain?
בסאסאה ³⁶ בשלחה תריבנה	⁸ By expelling her, by sending her away, you will contend with her.
הגה ברוחו הקשה ביום קדים	He removed [her] with his harsh breath on the day of the east wind.

³³ Gen 1:28. The tragic result, of course, was that instead of fulfilling this blessing, humanity filled the earth with violence (ותמלא הארץ חמס, Gen 6:11, 13). This violence prompted the flood, after which God recommissions Noah and his sons with the original mandate to fill the earth (Gen 9:1, 7). The "filling the land" motif appears again at the beginning of the book of Exodus, at which point the Israelites were fruitful (פרו), "swarmed" (וישרצו), multiplied (וירבו), and became very very strong (ויעצמו במאד מאד), so that the land was full of them (ותמלא הארץ אתם) (Exod 1:7).

³⁴ The particle אם can have an alternative sense (*or*) before the second member of a double question, especially in poetic parallelism when repeating the same question in different words (*GKC* §150h). Cf. Job 4:17; Isa 10:15; Jer 5:29.

³⁵ MT reads הַרְגִּיו (*qal* pass. part., those slain by him), reflected in the translation above. 1QIsa^a, reflected by Greek and Syriac, reads הורגיו (*qal* act. part., his slayers). The latter has the benefit of the versions support, as well as voice agreement with its parallel clause (cf. Williamson, "Sound, Sense and Language," 8–9).

³⁶ The word סאסאה is a *hapax legomenon* of uncertain meaning. Proposals include: (1) an otherwise unattested root based on parallel with the word בשלחה (*pilpel* infinitive, *expelling her*), (2) a derivation of the noun סאה, measure of grain (*little by little*), (3) a noun based on Greek μαχόμενος (*quarrelling*), taking its sense from the vb. ריב, and (4) a word related to the Arabic root ساسا, calling for cattle (*shouting*), which though similar in appearance, is hardly appropriate for the context. The

לכן בזאת יכפר עון יעקב	⁹ Therefore by this the sin of Jacob will be atoned for,
וזה כל פרי הסר ³⁷ חטאתו	and this will be the whole fruit of the removal of his sin:
בשומו כל אבני מזבח	when he makes all the altar stones
כאבני גרמנפצות	like the stones of crushed limestone.
לא יקמו אשרים וחמנים	The Asherim and the incense altars will not stand.

It is not difficult to imagine Isa 24–27 concluding with Isa 27:6. Certainly the paired images of Leviathan's slain carcass (v. 1) and Israel's boundless fruitfulness (vv. 2–6) would have brought Isa 24–27 to an aptly triumphant close. Those two eschatological oracles echo, even epitomise, the text's thematic heartbeat—decisive judgment for every competitor of YHWH and revivification of the once withering vineyard of God.

Yet, however fitting this conclusion might seem, the composition does not actually conclude with 27:6, but instead continues with one final "response" (vv. 7–11) and pair of "announcements" (vv. 12–13). This last response of Isa 24–27 has proven particularly challenging for interpreters, as even a cursory glance at the secondary literature demonstrates. Kaiser titles the unit simply "A Difficult Text," lamenting that "one can read these verses again and again without knowing exactly to whom they are referring and how they fit into their context."³⁸ Indeed, it includes cryptic rhetorical questions, a number of *hapax legomena*, the mention of *Asherim* and atonement, and entities without clear referents. In addition to these exegetical puzzles, the overall coherence of the section and its role in the larger text are not immediately clear. Furthermore, there exists little agreement even among those who attempt to find a degree of coherence in the chapter, who admit that the verses have

following בשלחה may have originated as a gloss for the rare word, and given the lack of better alternative, this understanding is reflected in the translation above.

³⁷ The *hip'il* infin. הסר is functioning substantivally within a construct chain (*the fruit of the removal of his sin*; cf. GKC § 114.1 for examples of inf. construct in each nominal case).

³⁸ Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 226, 227.

"no . . . apparent thematic relationship to the preceding material"³⁹ and "appear to transition abruptly with ambiguous contents."⁴⁰

The opening questions in v. 7 follow the vineyard song without conjunction or other syntactic connector, prefaced only by an initial interrogative-ה. They are highly paronomastic, each repeating variations on a particular verbal root, נכה in the first case, and הרג in the second. Both clauses begin with the prep. כ, indicating a comparison relationship between the main verb and its predicate, and the clauses are joined by the conjunctive particle אם.⁴¹ In addition to the referential ambiguity (*Who* is doing *what* to *whom?*), the grammar itself is ambiguous, since the construct phrases could be read with either a subjective or an objective genitive.⁴²

The solution to the ambiguity may lie in the use of the terms נכה and הרג elsewhere in the book, which suggests the comparison being made is between YHWH's treatment of Israel and YHWH's treatment of Israel's abusers. Hibbard helpfully traces other instances of the root נכה in Isaiah, and argues that its appearance in 27:7 alludes to a "striking discourse" elsewhere in the book.⁴³ From the opening scene of Israel's condition (1:5), the root נכה has signalled an important motif for the book, in which Assyria (or YHWH) is the subject. However, Assyria later becomes the object of the

³⁹ Marvin Sweeney, "New Gleanings from an Old Vineyard: Isaiah 27 Reconsidered," in *Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis: Studies in Memory of William Hugh Brownlee*, ed. C.A. Evans and W.F. Stinespring (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 88. Sweeney similarly finds a significant degree of unity in the chapter, an argument which be be discussed further below.

⁴⁰ Kim, *Reading Isaiah*, 131. Kim nonetheless finds textual grounds to posit a contrast between the soon to be forgiven "Jacob" and the wicked city soon to be destroyed.

⁴¹ This is an expected pattern for "polar" questions, which expect a yes/no response (see Waltke and O'Connor, *Syntax*, 40.3). E.g. Josh 5:13—הלנו אתה אם לצרינו ("Are you for us *or* for our enemies?").

⁴² For a detailed discussion of the syntactical possibilities, see Leene, "Isaiah 27:7–9 as a Bridge," 200–202.

⁴³ Hibbard, "Isaiah xxvii 7 and Intertextual Discourse about 'Striking' in the Book of Isaiah," *VT* 55.4 (2005), 461–76.

striking. Thus for Hibbard, the obliqueness of 27:7 is evidence of its allusion to these other "striking" references, with Assyria as the "paradigmatic example" of that striker who has been struck. The questions are dialogical ("disputation speech"),⁴⁴ directed towards an implicit pessimism, or perhaps even a complaint: "YHWH has not helped us, but has treated us like enemies." The implied answer is negative, thus implicitly making the claim that, although YHWH has treated his people harshly, he has not treated them with the same harshness as he has treated their enemies.

Most agree that the questions' focus is the severity of judgment (i.e. YHWH has treated Israel less harshly).⁴⁵ However, it is worth noting that this precise comparison is not explicit in the text. In fact, the following verse suggests a comparison of more than degree alone. The key issue may be less about the severity of Israel's suffering and more about the end towards which it is directed. In other words, the punishment comparison of v. 7 is not simply one of *degree*, but of *purpose*.⁴⁶ So although the presumed answer to these rhetorical questions is negative, the rest of the unit (vv. 8–9) offers explanation for why this implicit complaint is not an accurate representation of reality.⁴⁷

Like the questions, the explanation (vv. 8–9) appears without discourse connector, leaving the reader to infer the relationship based on other cohesive elements. Lexically, the terms תריבנה (*you will contend with her*), along with the three terms for exile, בסאסאה (*by expelling her*), בשלחה (*by sending her away*), and הגה (*he removed [her]*), along with the "harsh breath" of the east wind, all identify YHWH's

⁴⁴ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 347.

⁴⁵ E.g. Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 184; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 336.

⁴⁶ This interpretation is certainly allowed by the use of the comparative/correspondence prep. כ, which opens both questions. The prep. כ "often denotes a sense of agreement in quantity or measure" or in "kind or quality" (Arnold and Choi, *Syntax*, 109).

⁴⁷ Pace Redditt, "Isaiah 24–27," 383.

harshness toward his own people. There is some question about the historical horizon of these exile terms, and whether they look to past experience, explain a present situation, threaten future disaster, or some combination of these.⁴⁸ For our purposes, it is not important to identify the historical moment to which these terms refer. The point is that they, along with the "east wind" associated with powerful judgment, are examples of YHWH's harsh treatment of his people, all of which are directed towards a different end than was, for example, that of Leviathan.⁴⁹ Whereas Leviathan is punished with death, Israel is disciplined for atonement and reinstatement of proper worship (v. 9). There are several instrumental ב-prepositions in this unit—בסאטאה (*by expelling her*, v. 8), בשלחה (*by sending her away*, v. 8), ברוחו (*by his breath*, v. 9), and בזאת (*by this*, v. 9)—which underscores the point being made: YHWH's violence is a *means* to something.

It is precisely this purpose which v. 9 details. At first glance, this verse "appears to be a non sequitur,"⁵⁰ in part because the concepts of atonement and idolatry have not appeared thus far in Isa 24–27. Unlike the other clauses of this unit, v. 9 begins with a discourse marker (לכן), which signals a logical relationship with

⁴⁸ Past: Hibbard (likely a "composite view of exile drawn from other texts and experiences," *Intertextuality*, 185). Present: Leene, "Isaiah 27:7–9 as a Bridge," 206–208. Future: Polaski (exile threat, using the language of divorce, beyond the physical removal from the land and to being forsaken by YHWH, *Authorizing an End*, 302–303); and Johnson (*Chaos*, 91).

⁴⁹ John Day has noted this rare occurrence of the "east wind" acting upon Israel, since more often the "east wind" brings disaster on Israel's enemies (e.g. Exod 10:13). This rarity contributes to his case that Isa 26:13–27:11 is dependent upon Hos 13:4–14:10 [Eng 9], since the Hosea text also features the east wind against Israel (Hos 13:15). He cites several other thematic parallels, most of which follow the same order as that of Hosea ("Case of Inner Scriptural Interpretation," 312). The other instances of the "east wind" as Israel's punishment are Isa 37:27 (1QIsa^a), Jer 18:17, and Ezek 19:12.

It should be noted that the motif of the "east wind" is used throughout the Hebrew Bible, sometimes in reference to divine acts of redemption (e.g. the crossing of the Red Sea, Exod 14:21), judgment (the east wind can capsize ships [Ezek 27:26; Ps 48:7]; and it can parch vegetation [Ezek 17:10; Jon 4:8]). It appears also in an idiom within the wisdom tradition to indicate foolishness ("to eat the east wind" [Hos 12:1; Job 15:2]).

⁵⁰ Johnson, *Chaos*, 89.

what precedes. The conjunction *לכן* is typically glossed "therefore"; in rhetorical terms, the particle points backward to the preceding statement(s) as the basis, reason, or prior condition for the next step in the argument. For Isa 27:9, this indicates that sin and atonement are integral to the issue at hand, namely *YHWH*'s treatment of his people. The condemnation of the Asherim and incense altars is that they "will not stand" (*לא יקמו*), the same terminology used of the judged earth in 24:20 (*ולא תסיף קום*) and of the Rephaim in 26:14 (*בל יקמו*) (and the opposite of *YHWH*'s dead, who "will rise" [*נבלתי יקומון*], 26:19). To summarise the logic of vv. 7–9: *YHWH* has not killed off his people like enemies (v. 7), but instead contends with them through exile (v. 8) for the purpose of atonement (v. 9a), which will be signified by the destruction of illicit cultic items (v. 9b).

4.2. Unit 2 (27:10–11)

An Abandoned City

כי עיר בצורה בוד נוה משלה ונעזב כמדבר שם ירעה עגל ושם ירבץ וכלה סעפיה ביבש קצירה תשברנה נשים באות מאירות אותה	¹⁰ Indeed the fortified city is alone, a neglected grazing place, abandoned like the desert. There the calf grazes, and there it lies down and strips bare its branches. When its shoots dry out, they will be broken. Women will come and kindle a fire with them.
כי לא עם בינות הוא על כן לא ירחמנו עשהו ויצרו לא יחננו	¹¹ For this is not a people of knowledge. Therefore their maker will not have pity on them, and their fashioner will not have compassion on them.

This second unit is united by its focus on an unnamed *fortified city* (*עיר בצורה*) and its dismal situation. The current state of this city is described using malediction tropes as deserted pastureland, populated only by foraging animals and nomads.⁵¹ The

⁵¹ One of the tropes of treaty-curses is the dwelling place of wild animals. Isa 34 is a more extensive example of the trope, but Isa 27:10 features it in reference to Israel (Hillers, *Treaty-Curses*, 53).

referential adverb שם (*there*) occurs twice in the description of the city (v. 10), both referring back to the fortified city (עיר בצורה). Similarly the feminine suffixes on סעפיה (*its* branches), קצירה (*its* shoots) refer back to the city. And although v. 11 does not mention the city, its כי clause signifies a conjunctive relationship that provides the causal basis for the city's terrible circumstances.

The first line of the unit is a verbless clause, suggesting a present condition (cf. Isa 1:7). Verbless clauses can also mark topical transitions: "Verbless clauses, are informationally marked, they typically signal informational discontinuity or discourse transition from one unit to another."⁵²

The identity of this "fortified city" is not immediately clear, especially in light of the repeated appearance of the city-motif (עיר/קריה) elsewhere in Isa 24–27 (i.e. the *city of chaos*, 24:10; cf. 25:2, 12; the *strong city* of 26:1). While some appeal to historical reconstructions, the pertinent issue here is the literary relationship between this city and the city-motif of Isa 24–27.⁵³ With this synchronic focus, some understand the "fortified city" to be the fallen city of chs. 24–26, i.e. symbol of Israel's oppressors, "a quintessential symbol of earthly power and oppression."⁵⁴ However, this reading of 27:10 does not adequately account for the following basis which closely connects this city with God's people ("this people" and "their maker") (27:11). The lack of Israel's spiritual knowledge is a repeated motif in the book of Isaiah, from the very opening case that, though a donkey knows the origin of its food, "Israel does not know, my people do not understand (עמי לא התבונן, Isa 1:3). The

⁵² Groom, *Linguistic Analysis*, 149.

⁵³ Some commentators argue that the "fortified city" of Isa 27:10 is Samaria, based on a posited rivalry between the Samaritans and the returnee community. Johnson sees in vv. 7–11 both Samaria and Jerusalem, the "result of poor editing" when two separate traditions were combined (*Chaos*, 91), which he argues explains the confusing alternation between masculine and feminine pronouns.

⁵⁴ Childs, *Isaiah*, 198.

expression "this is a people" is also used elsewhere in the book to describe Israel:⁵⁵

כי לא עם בינות הוא	For this is not a people of knowledge	(Isa 27:11)
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כי עם מרי הוא	For this is a rebellious people	(Isa 30:9)
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והוא עם בזוז ושסוי	But this is a plundered and robbed people	(Isa 42:22)
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The present aims do not allow for exploring these intertextual connections further, but these examples illustrate how the terminology of "this people" without "knowledge" used in 27:11 is distinctive to God's relationship with his people Israel.⁵⁶ Because of this connection in the book of Isaiah, this "fortified" and deserted city should be understood as one belonging to a people who is special to God.⁵⁷

4.3. Cohesion in Section 2

Although conjunctions and other discourse markers are sparse in this difficult "response" section, there are a few such markers that provide structure for the section, including the terms *לכן* (v. 9), *כי* (v. 10), *כי* (v. 11), and *על כן* (v. 11). As noted above, the conjunction *לכן* links the whole statement about YHWH's contention with his people (vv. 7–8) with the purpose for this contention, namely atonement (v. 9). Similarly, *כי* in v. 10 relates the entire description of the abandoned city (vv. 10–11) to the preceding explanation of discipline, since the fortified city, in its state of isolation (*בדד*), neglect (*משלה*), and abandonment (*נעזב*), is the realisation of YHWH's *expelling* (*בסאסאה*), *sending away* (*בשלחה*), and *removing* (*הגה*) actions (v. 8). As such,

⁵⁵ Often the distancing, even pejorative, designation "this people" is used in Isaiah in place of the more intimate "his/my people" (Richard Schultz, "Nationalism and Universalism in Isaiah," in *Interpreting Isaiah: Issues and Approaches*, ed. David Firth and H.G.M. Williamson [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009], 135). The distancing expression in Isa 27:11 is an example of the rhetorical power of pronouns; cf. Gen 3:12; Exod 17:4; Deut 9:26, 29.

⁵⁶ So Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 74.

⁵⁷ Harm van Grol, "Isaiah 27, 10-11: God and His Own People," in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah: Festschrift Willem A.M. Beuken*, ed. J. van Ruiten and M. Vervenne (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 196. Cf. Sweeney, who equates the city with Jerusalem (*Isaiah 1–39*, 348).

it cites the present situation of Israel as illustration of YHWH's redemptive harshness. Finally in v. 11, **כי** and **על כן** should be understood as correlative particles.⁵⁸ When these particles function as a pair, the grounds of the **על כן** clause is found in the preceding **כי** clause: God refuses to show compassion for his people because of their spiritual ignorance (cf. Isa 1:2–3).

There is a programmatic text from an earlier chapter of Isaiah which shares a unique lexical collocation with Isa 27:9 and which, in my view, provides a clue to the question of coherence in Isa 27:7–11. This text is the throne room vision of Isa 6, in which YHWH commissions Isaiah to preach to a blind and deaf people. Before the prophet can perform his commissioned task, his own sin is addressed by receiving on his lips a burning coal from the altar:

הנה נגע זה על שפתיך וסר עונך וחטאתך תכפר	Behold, this has touched your [Isaiah's] lips, and your <i>sin</i> is removed, and your <i>iniquity</i> is atoned for. (Isa 6:7)
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Notice the close verbal correspondence with Isa 27:

לכן בזאת יכפר עון יעקב וזוה כל פרי הסר חטאתו	Therefore by this the <i>sin</i> of Jacob will be atoned for, and this will be the full fruit of the <i>removal</i> of his <i>iniquity</i> . (Isa 27:9)
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Isa 27:9 shares a unique lexical collocation with Isa 6:7, as they are the only two texts in the Hebrew Bible which pair the synonymous verbs **כפר** (*to be atoned/covered* [pu'al]) and **סר** (*to remove* [hip'il]) and the synonymous nouns **עון** (*sin*) and **חטאת** (*iniquity*). Isaiah's throne room vision describes the atonement of the prophet's individual sin, but the nation is left with the grim prospect of a hardening message until people are far from their homes (ורחק . . . את האדם) (6:12), cities and homes

⁵⁸ This is a point stressed by R. Frankena in his treatment of the adv. **על כן** ("Einige Bemerkungen zum Gebrauch des Adverbs 'Al-Ken' im Hebräischen," in *Studia Biblica et Semitica*, 94–95). Interestingly, Frankena understands the clause **כי לא עם** as the beginning of a sentence ("Because it is a people without insight, [therefore] their maker will have no pity on them, and their creator will have no mercy").

without inhabitant (ערים מאין יושב) (6:11), and the land "greatly forsaken" (ורבה העזובה) (6:12).

In taking up this language from Isaiah's commission, Isa 27:7–11 evokes the past judgment on Israel and, given its verbless clauses, appears to confirm that the threat has been realised. The judgment announced in ch. 6 (exile, cities and homes without people, great forsakenness in the land) is no longer only a threat, but has become a reality. As the emphatic statement of 27:10 describes, "Indeed, the fortified city *is* alone, a field abandoned and forsaken (נעזב) like the wilderness." Thus, despite its terseness of language and lack of details, this section (27:7–11) is united in its concern to explain the present difficulties in continuity with the past announcement of judgment as evidence of YHWH "striving" with his people. It demonstrates the reliability of YHWH's past word of judgment, but in evoking the purification of Isaiah the prophet, also points forward to a day when Israel too will be purified. The harshness of God toward Israel is not for punitive or destructive purposes, but redemptive ones.

5. Section 3 (27:12–13)—The Gatherings

והיה ביום ההוא	¹² And it will happen on that day,
יחבט יהוה משבלת ⁵⁹	YHWH will thresh the grain,
הנהר עד נחל מצרים	from the River to the Wadi of Egypt,
ואתם תלקטו לאחד אחד	and you will be gleaned one by one,
בני ישראל	O sons of Israel.
והיה ביום ההוא	¹³ And it will happen on that day,
יתקע בשופר גדול	the great shofar will be blown,
ובאו האבדים ⁶⁰ בארץ אשור	and those lost in the land of Assyria
והנדחים בארץ מצרים	and those scattered in the land of Egypt
והשתחוו ליהוה בהר הקדש	will come and worship YHWH on the holy mountain in
בירושלם	Jerusalem.

This final unit consists of two paired "in that day" announcements, both related to eschatological repatriation. It is possible that these two oracles are conveying the same idea with different imagery, perhaps emphasising different aspects of regathering, such as individuality (*one by one*) or purpose (to *worship YHWH*).⁶¹

The first statement (v. 12) employs another agricultural metaphor. Whereas YHWH performs the duties of a careful vintner in 27:2–6, he is a harvester in v. 12. The verb חבט (*to thresh*) indicates a hitting action used to harvest various crops (e.g. olives, spices, and barley, and wheat). After this threshing, YHWH will "glean" (לקט) each individual Israelite, perhaps with the connotation of an indigent person picking up every left-over piece of barley after the reaping (e.g. Lev 19:9–10; Ruth 2:3). While some have inferred from this image a separation of wheat (Jews) from chaff

⁵⁹ The word משבלת is ambiguous, since the noun שבלת can refer to an *ear of grain* (Isa 17:5; Ruth 2:1) or less commonly, *rushing water* (Ps 69:3, 16). The verb יחבט (*he will thresh*) is normally transitive (e.g. Deut 24:20; Judg 6:11), but the *mêm*-prefix is not expected for its direct object. The versions understand the term as a reference to water. Roberts argues that it is a double entendre used to emphasise the harvest metaphor ("Double Entendre in First Isaiah," *CBQ* 54 [1992], 40–1). While this may be the case, the translation above reflects the harvest connection, since the agricultural sense of the term שבלת is more contextually appropriate than the rushing water sense.

⁶⁰ Pace F. C. Fensham, who proposes the following translation for the bet-preposition based on its use in cognate languages: "and the lost shall come from the land of Assyria, and the outcasts from the land of Egypt" ("The Preposition B in Isaiah 27:13," *EvQ* 29 [1957], 157).

⁶¹ Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 340; Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 348.

(Gentiles),⁶² this overextends the metaphor, since there is nothing else in the context which suggests such a separation.

The geographic span of the threshing and gleaning is specified from "the River" to the Wadi of Egypt. The latter is usually identified as Wadi 'el-Arish, the traditional southern border of Israel (specifically, Judah's land allotment),⁶³ and "the River" as the Euphrates. The definite article on the term הנהר is monadic (and therefore exophoric), so it does not function cohesively in this case. These boundaries appear (in slightly fuller form) in the land inheritance of the Abrahamic covenant:

ביום ההוא כרת יהוה את אברם ברית לאמר לזרעך נתתי את הארץ הזאת מנהר מצרי עד הנהר הגדל נהר פרת	On that day, YHWH made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your seed I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates." (Gen 15:18)
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See also Gen 31:21; Exod 23:30–31; Deut 1:7–8; 11:24; and Josh 1:4. This land boundary appears later in the book of Kings in the description of the brief period of peace and affluence under Solomon. The commentary describes an ideal rule:

Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and rejoiced. And Solomon was ruling over all the kingdoms from *the River*, and the land of the Philistines, to *the border of Egypt*. And they came and offered gifts and served Solomon all the days of his life.
 (1Kgs 4:20–5:1)

The geographic reference in Isa 27:12 is therefore most likely the idealised boundaries of Israel (cf. Isa 26:15; 1 Kgs 5:4; Mic 7:11–13).⁶⁴ Thus, the prophecy of

⁶² E.g. Duhm, *Jesaia*, 164.

⁶³ The Wadi of Egypt (נהל מצרים) was to be the southern border of the land of Israel (Num 34:5), an instruction which was realised at least for a brief period (Josh 15:4, 47; 1Kgs 8:65//2Ch 7:8).

⁶⁴ Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 72. These boundaries elsewhere designate the newly-conquered domain of Babylon (2Kgs 24:7—"The king of Egypt did not leave his land again, because the king of Babylon had taken everything that had belonged to the king of Egypt, *from the Wadi of Egypt to the River Euphrates*").

Isa 27:12 is addressed directly to those Israelites within the land who, to use the metaphor of the text, will be individually gleaned after the reaping.

Verse 13, the final verse of the composition, is a second gathering prophecy, but instead of an agricultural metaphor, it uses a political one. The sound of the *shofar* (שופר) could communicate in various different contexts, including cultic, military, and political. It is mentioned in connection to the installations of Ehud (Judg 3:27), Gideon (Judg 6:34), King Saul (1 Kgs 1:34, 39), and King Jehu (2 Kgs 9:13). The imagery is used elsewhere in Isaiah in reference to the eschatological reign of YHWH: the inhabitants of the earth are to pay attention at the sound of the trumpet, because "at that time tribute will be brought to YHWH of hosts . . . to Mt. Zion" (18:7).⁶⁵ So it is likely used here in reference to the rule of YHWH.

Also unlike v. 12, the second regathering statement refers to people *outside* the boundaries of the land, in the furthest reaches of the earth: those lost (האבדים) in the land of Assyria, and those scattered (והנדחים) in the land of Egypt. The second verb is a near synonym of the first, and it has particularly strong resonances with other passages in Isaiah which use the regathering motif (e.g. Isa 11:12; 56:8). The regathering motif may be more widely associated with the ideal king motif (cf. 11:10–12).⁶⁶

It has troubled some that such a "universalistic" text as Isa 24–27, which speaks of the attendance of all nations at YHWH's feast on Mt. Zion, would conclude on such a particularist note, or in Hibbard's words, have such an "overt nationalistic

⁶⁵ Kaiser identifies this mighty nation as Ethiopia (*Isaiah* 13–39, 96); Goldingay, on the other hand, suggests that the Cushite embassy is sent to Assyria, who is the feared people (*Isaiah*, 116–17). The latter is more plausible in my view, but either way, the trumpet sound will announce a foreign nation's approach to Mt. Zion with tribute.

⁶⁶ Williamson, *Variations on a Theme*, 54.

emphasis."⁶⁷ Plöger identifies the common thread through ch. 27 to be the reunification of the formerly united Israel, which incidentally "does not contribute very much to the interpretation of the eschatological narrative" of chs. 24–26.⁶⁸ However, although some have argued this refers only to Israelites in diaspora,⁶⁹ the final verse does not specify "sons of Israel," but remains open to non-Israelites. One cannot say with certainty, but because the paired concepts of being scattered and being gathered to the "holy mountain" are not reserved for Israel, I find it more likely that Isa 27:13 extends the repatriation promise to all nations.⁷⁰

6. Cohesion in Movement 3—Isaiah 27:1–13

Most scholars agree that this final chapter of Isa 24–27 is among the most difficult in the entire book, especially in regards to the question of coherence. The analysis above has examined the three sections of Isa 27, and has argued that these can be understood individually as 1) a restatement of eschatological recreation—slaying the chaos creature and recommissioning Israel to fruitfulness (27:1–6); 2) a theological explanation for the community's difficulties (27:7–11); and 3) paired eschatological visions of return to Mt. Zion for worship (27:12–13). These three sections use

⁶⁷ Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 168. The question of nationalism and universalism in Isaiah is a much larger issue, since the book contains strong elements of both ideologies. In an essay devoted to the topic, Richard Schultz lists a variety of approaches to the issue: no resolution at all to the apparent tension (e.g. Davies), socio-historical or tradition-critical perspectives (Blenkinsopp and Begrich, respectively), redaction-critical (Torrey), rhetorical (Bewer), semantic (de Boer), intertextual (HC Kim), redemptive-historical, hermeneutical/theological (Lindblom). Schultz, while not minimising the different emphases, warns against a false antithesis between these two categories. Both national and worldwide concerns function in the final canonical shaping of the book, and from them emerges a pattern which ties the punishment and restoration of Israel to the transformation of the nations ("Nationalism and Universalism in Isaiah," in *Interpreting Isaiah: Issues and Approaches*, ed. David Firth and H.G.M. Williamson [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009], 122–144).

⁶⁸ Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 75.

⁶⁹ E.g. Jenner, "The Big Shophar (Isaiah 27:13)," *Studies in Isaiah 24–27*, 157–82.

⁷⁰ Gary Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 2007), 465.

different metaphors and different modes of discourse, so it remains to consider the relationship between these three constituent sections of Movement 3.

To begin, the shifts in temporal perspective between sections are important, and this creates a bookended structure to the movement. Within this future–present–future structure, one can trace the use of agricultural imagery across the movement. The agriculture imagery focal in vv. 2–6 continues throughout the whole movement, which creates a lexical-cohesive network of terms related to horticulture. The song of the vineyard reverses the pronouncement of judgment from Isa 5:1–7, and concludes with Israel's "fruit" (תְּנוּבָה) filling the whole world. Without pushing the metaphor too far, there seems to be a progression from planting and cultivating (e.g. כָּרַם, *vineyard*; אֲשַׁקְנָה, *I water it*; שְׁמִיר שִׁית, *thorny thistles*) (27:2–5), to producing fruit (יִשְׂרָאֵל, *he will take root*; יִצְיֵן, *he will bloom*; וּפְרָח, *and he will send out shoots*) (27:6)—with an interlude of present non-productivity (וְכֹלָה סַעֲפִיָּה, [a calf] *strips bare its branches*; בִּיבֶשׁ קִצִּירָה תִּשְׁבַּרְנָה, *when its shoots dry out, they will be broken*) (27:10–11)—and finally harvest (יַחֲבֹט, *he will thresh*; תִּלְקֹטוּ, *you will be gleaned*) (27:12).⁷¹

I argued above that the solitary "fortified city" of Isa 27:10 represents the people of YHWH. If there is a geographical referent, then it is most likely Jerusalem or more generally Judea. This is based primarily on the identification of the city with the distancing phrase "this people" (27:11) seen elsewhere in the book (e.g. Isa 6:9, 10; 8:6; 28:11; 29:13) and the more intimate reference of "his maker" and "his

⁷¹ Some have proposed that the harvest is fruit rather than grain (F. Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 457; Edward Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. 1 [Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1941], 303). The terminology in 27:12 does not specify the product, since both verbs can take multiple objects. So the verb חָבַט can refer to the beating of olive trees (Deut 24:20), grains (Judg 6:11; Ruth 2:17), or spices (Isa 28:27). And the vb. לָקַט [*pi'el*] can take multiple objects, e.g. grain/corn (Ruth 2:2), table scraps (Judg 1:7), usually with the sense of picking up single or remnant objects. The term לָקַט *can* refer to the gleaning of fallen grapes in a vineyard (Lev 19:10), which is prohibited (וּפֶרֶט כֶּרֶםְךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט, *the fallen grapes in your vineyard, you shall not glean*).

fashioner" (27:11), which refer to YHWH's special relationship with Israel (Isa 43:1; 44:2, 21, 24; 64:7 [8]). Other details in the description of the solitary city of Isa 27:10–11 suggest it is to be contrasted with the vineyard (27:2–6) as a fulfilment of the judgment of the first song of the vineyard (Isa 5:1–7). The first vineyard song pronounced judgment on Judah, since despite the attentive care of the vintner, the vineyard was non-productive. As noted above, the consequences include imagery that is reversed in Isa 27: the vineyard will be made into a waste (Isa 5:6//27:10), devoured by feral animals (Isa 5:5//27:10), trampled (Isa 5:5//27:10), and allowed to dry out (Isa 5:6//27:11). The "response" section of Movement 2 wrestles with the reality of such a judgment in light of the as-yet unrealised eschatological promise of the new song of the vineyard. Just as the new song of the vineyard reverses the judgment of the first song of the vineyard, the explanation of YHWH's "striving" with his people (27:7–9) and the description of the abandoned fortified city (27:10–11) echo past judgments to describe the community's present situation. The implication is that, far from becoming the idealised vineyard of 27:2–6, Judah/Jerusalem is suffering for its refusal to produce the good fruit expected of them. Yet even this suffering is contextualised within God's plan to restore his people.

Far from being peripheral to the message of Isa 24–26, ch. 27 continues the description of divine reign and eschatological recreation. It reiterates the opposing fates of God's enemy and his people Israel to make the case that the community's plight (including dispersion and ruined cities) is part of the divine plan of restoration. It moves beyond mere restatement of the themes of chs. 24–26 in its response to the implicit complaint against YHWH, explaining that, like rebellious humanity (24:20) and the royal *rephaim* (26:14), Israel's own illicit altars must be destroyed never to

rise again (27:9). The movement envisions a day when YHWH alone will be venerated, when the cosmic powers of chaos and disorder will be slain and the spiritual condition of Israel will be alive and whole, when YHWH in compassion and mercy will gather his people from the far reaches of the world to worship on Mt. Zion.

PART III

SYNTHESIS

I was wakened from my dream of the ruined world by the sound
of rain falling slowly onto the dry earth of my place in time.
On the parched garden, the cracked-open pastures,
the dusty grape leaves, the brittle grass, the drooping foliage of the woods,
fell still the quiet rain.

—Wendell Berry, "XXI," *The Peace of Wild Things*

CHAPTER 8 SYNTHESIS

1. An "Isaiah Apocalypse?"

This thesis set out to evaluate the structure and coherence of Isa 24–27, the so-called "Isaiah Apocalypse." It began with the observation that this four-chapter composition holds a paradoxical position as both a widely-recognised section of the book of Isaiah and a literary complex of highly contested structure and conceptual coherence. The tension between unifying features, like the reoccurring city motif, and disjunctive features, like the sudden shifts in genre, contributes to the sense of disorientation felt by so many readers, and has prompted some to consider Isa 24–27 a "maddeningly fragmentary text that rapidly shifts its focus."¹ The thesis proposed that the categories of literary cohesion can help to establish a coherent reading of a text, and can serve as tools for evaluating the literary connectedness of Isa 24–27 in particular. The analysis showed that, when treated as a single discourse, Isa 24–27 falls into three movements of similar structure—24:1–25:5 (Movement 1), 25:6–26:21 (Movement 2), and 27:1–13 (Movement 3)—each movement announcing YHWH's reign and responding to this announcement. It also considered the role of disjunctive elements, which may constitute syntactic "interruptions" without being true interruptions to the coherency of the discourse. The major cohesive ties within Isa 24–27 reach across genre boundaries and other disjunctions and together develop several themes which support the rhetorical aims of the text. This penultimate

¹ Donald Polaski, "Destruction, Construction, Argumentation: A Rhetorical Reading of Isaiah 24–27," in *Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Apocalyptic discourse*, ed. Greg Carey and L. Gregory Bloomquist (St. Louis, MI: Chalice, 1999), 21.

chapter will discuss these major cohesive features which reach across the entirety of Isa 24–27 and unify these four chapters as a single discourse.

2. Cohesion in Isaiah 24–27

The key cohesive features which span all three movements of Isa 24–27 and contribute to the "texture" of these chapters include the text's focus on the eschatological future; the city motif; the themes of life, death, and new creation; and the rule of YHWH. Although other features could be added, these four were chosen since they are the most important for the message and rhetorical aims of the text.

2.1. The Temporal Perspective of Isaiah 24–27

The first unifying feature of Isa 24–27 is its future, eschatological orientation.² This "futuristic outlook" is the composition's primary temporal perspective, and it is against this eschatological backdrop that the non-eschatological, present-time "response" passages (25:1–5; 26:7–19; 27:7–11) are spoken. The predictive, eschatological perspective is conveyed in part by the repetition of the prophetic formula ביום ההוא (*on that day*), a phrase which is particularly concentrated in Isa 24–27 (occurring 7x—24:21; 25:9; 26:1; 27:1, 2, [6], 12, 13). The (articular) deictic adjective ההוא refers to *that day* of divine judgment already known from the context, most immediately 24:1–20, and this tie is strengthened by the repetition of the phrase at least once in each of the three movements. The temporal phrase refers more

² Plöger observes the "futuristic outlook" as the dominant view of Isa 24–27 as we now have it (*Theocracy and Eschatology*, 54). The recurring *in that day* expression "binds the passage in its eschatological context together . . . replete with universal and eschatological language" (Day, "God and Leviathan in Isaiah 27.1," 424).

distantly to its other uses in "First Isaiah,"³ which frequently address a similar future divine rule, a theocratic rule which entails the utter defeat of enemy nations, return from exile/diaspora, worldwide peace, the purification of Israel, and cosmic upheaval and restoration.⁴ Each "announcement" section of Isa 24–27 features at least one occurrence of "in that day" which introduces some aspect(s) of the rule of YHWH: First, the centre of YHWH's rule will be Mt. Zion, and it will have no heavenly or earthly rivals (24:21–23). Second, his rule will bring restored life, comfort, and joy to all who have "waited on" YHWH (including Gentiles), but punishment to the prideful (25:6–12). Third, his rule will create the world anew, slaying the chaos creature and restoring Israel's fecundity (27:1–6). Fourth, his rule will bring worshipers to Jerusalem from inside and outside the land of Israel (27:12–13). And fifth, although not part of a prophetic announcement like the previous four, the eschatological song of ch. 26 presents the rule of YHWH as a time when Jerusalem will be restored to righteousness and faithfulness (26:1–2).

Thus, when one traces the phrase "on that day" across Isa 24–27, a collection of pictures emerges which describes the events and characteristics of the future reign of YHWH. This series of acts are not chronological in any strict sense, but are instead different ways of poetically describing an ideal future. The interspersed *w^eqatal* verbal chains (e.g. 24:21–23; 25:6–11; 27:12–13) may give the sense of progression in time, but to follow this rigidly is to misunderstand the flexibility of poetic style. For example, the trampling of Moab described in 25:10–12 should not be placed on a

³ E.g. Isa 2:20; 4:2; 11:10; 19:24. The expression ביום ההוא occurs only once in chs. 40–55 (52:6), and not at all in chs. 56–66.

⁴ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Opening the Sealed Book: Interpretations of the Book of Isaiah in Late Antiquity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 9. Blenkinsopp represents the consensus view that the phrase "on that day" signals an editorial addition to an earlier prophetic oracle and extends its scope further into the future. Cf. DeVries, *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, 305–6.

timeline after world judgment (24:1–23).⁵ Moab is a restatement, a specific example, of the essential contrast between YHWH's loyal citizens and the insubordinate. Similarly, the repatriation statements (27:12–13), also introduced with a *w^eqatal* verb, cannot be read as temporally subsequent events on an eschatological timeline within the context of Isa 24–27, since all nations (including the people of YHWH) have already gathered on Mt. Zion (25:6–8) and in land of Judah (26:1). These regathering statements are not the chronologically final event, but are among the many impressionistic visions of the eschatological future, closing Isa 24–27 as a reversal of the worldwide scattering which opens the composition (24:1).

However, not all of Isa 24–27 is eschatological, a detail which is frequently under-appreciated in scholarship on the passage. It is important to take into consideration those sections which are not eschatological announcements but present "responses," because they provide clues to the rhetorical function of the text. Each movement begins by announcing something about the eschatological future but, with the exception of 26:1–6, the responses that follow turn to the existing realities of the community:

Movement 1

Announcement	- - - -	<u>future</u> judgment and divine reign ("on that day," 24:1–23)
Response		<u>present</u> praise (25:1–5)

Movement 2

Announcement	- - - -	<u>future</u> banquet and judgment ("on this mountain/that day," 25:6–12)
Responses		<u>future</u> praise ("on that day," 26:1–6) <u>present</u> prayer and confession (26:7–21)

Movement 3

Announcement	- - - -	<u>future</u> judgment and restoration
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⁵ Pace Robert Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life: A Study of the Development of the Doctrine of the Resurrection in the Old Testament*, trans. John P. Smith (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1960), 127 n. 6.

		(<i>"on that day,"</i> 27:1–6)
Response		<u>present</u> explanation (27:7–11)
Announcement	- - - -	<u>future</u> restoration (<i>"on that day,"</i> 27:12–13)

The first of these responses is simply an individual hymn in praise of YHWH's victory (25:1–5), and the second is similar, but attributed to eschatological worshipers (26:1–6). These hymnic responses stress the certainty of the divine word and invite allegiance to him.

The two following non-hymnic responses, however, reflect the distress of a people who are far from the imagined theocratic ideal. Their prayer (26:7–19) laments the apparent victory of evil but expresses trust in YHWH's care and ultimate restoration of his people. The striking concluding "resurrection" statement (26:19) echoes the preceding announcement of the defeat of *Mot* (25:8) and ultimately reflects the same loyalty to YHWH as the eschatological hymn that precedes it (26:3–4). The final response (27:7–11) is not hymnic and explains that Israel's suffering is not due to YHWH's abandonment, but rather the people's spiritual ignorance. Although consistently looking forward to the eschatological future, Isa 24–27 shifts from these future visions to the present, to express loyalty and hope. The text's perlocution (to use a speech-act term) is to inspire allegiance to YHWH as king, and this back-and-forth between eschatological vision and present difficulty juxtaposes the ideal with the reality.

2.2. The Cities of Isaiah 24–27

A second major cohesive feature that spans the entirety of Isa 24–27 is the symbolic city or, more precisely, cities. An unnamed city appears at least once in every chapter of Isa 24–27, and its cryptic nature has prompted significant discussion surrounding

its identity.⁶ Despite this longstanding interpretive discussion, there is no consensus regarding the referent of the expression קריית תהו ("city of chaos," 24:10), which continues to inspire speculation. Regardless of the identity of the city, this recurring literary image functions as a *Leitmotif* for Isa 24–27. Below, I will argue that 1) the lexemes עיר and קריה are used interchangeably in Isa 24–27 and do not in themselves indicate separate referents; 2) the ideological symbolism of the city, a widespread feature in ancient texts, supports a symbolic reading of the city in Isa 24–27; and 3) there are three distinct referents for the city-motif in Isa 24–27, introduced at strategic points in the discourse, and corresponding to the temporal perspectives discussed above.

The expression קריית תהו in Isa 24:10 is the first appearance of the unnamed city. The excursus on the "City of Chaos" (Chapter 4) argued that the clause is better rendered as follows: *the city is broken down into disorder*. Thus Isa 24:10 does not introduce a mysterious City of Chaos, but rather collective human life as distinct from agriculture, both of which suffer the effects of judgment. As described in Chapter 4, the literary symbol does not represent a geographic location or people group, but humanity's strength and pride, destined for divine judgment.

However, Isa 24:10 is only the first of several appearances of an unnamed city in Isa 24–27. Its subsequent appearances use three different nouns and a number of modifying phrases. The first noun is קריה, which occurs four times in Isa 24–27 (24:10; 25:2, 3; 26:5). The term קריה is seen frequently in toponyms (e.g. *Kiriath-*

⁶ See Chapter 1. Some interpreters identify the city motif as the primary theme of Isa 24–27. For example, Christopher Seitz titles these chapters "A Tale of Two Cities" based on the motif's importance (*Isaiah 1–39*, 172ff.). Micaël Bürki also argues for the centrality of two opposing cities, a dynamic which "forms the structure of these chapters [24–27] and binds the different sections together" ("City of Pride, City of Glory: The Opposition of Two Cities in Isaiah 24–27," 59).

baal [Josh 15:60; 18:14]), but it also occurs some 30 times in the Hebrew Bible as a common noun.⁷ It is typically found in poetic texts, and "may be considered synonymous with עִיר."⁸ In the Hebrew Bible, the term קריה is used in reference to both non-Judahite cities and Jerusalem.⁹ The second term for "city" in Isa 24–27 is עיר, which occurs five times (24:12; 25:2 [2x]; 26:1; 27:10). Unlike קריה, this is a very common lexeme in biblical Hebrew with over 1,000 occurrences. Although the term עיר does not specify size, it refers to a continuously inhabited, generally protected settlement. These settlements (ערים) could be walled with gates or other fortifications (as opposed to חצר [*village*] or כפר [*town*]).¹⁰ Although the political role of the city depends on the time and cultural setting, defence is a constant function of the city: "The significance of the city lay . . . in the protection that it could offer in times of distress not only to the inhabitants but also to those who dwelt in the immediate vicinity."¹¹ The third term is ארמון (*palace*), which is used only once in poetic parallel with the more common terminology of קריה בצורה (*fortified city*, 25:2).

Several other occurrences in biblical Hebrew illustrate that the terms קריה and עיר can be used in reference to the same place, which suggests that the two city terms in Isa 24–27 may share a referent. The first example is from a prose narrative, which uses the two terms interchangeably:

⁷ In addition, the term is attested nine times in the Aramaic portion of Ezra and twice in Sirach (33:18 [=36:12]; 49: 6[8]) (Mulder, קריה, *TDOT*, 13:166–67). The etymologically-related noun קרת is found only in poetry (Job 29:7; Prov 8:3; 9:3, 14; 11:11).

⁸ Ibid., 166.

⁹ In Isaiah, the term קריה typically refers to Jerusalem (Isa 1:21, 26; 22:2; 29:1; 32:13; 33:20).

¹⁰ E. Fry, "Cities, Towns and Villages in the Old Testament, *BT* 30 (1979), 434–38; E. Otto, עיר, *TDOT*, 11:54–55. This characterisation is not without exception, as the term can also be used for explicitly *unwalled* habitations (Deut 3:5) or for fortified areas within a larger city (2 Sam 5:9).

¹¹ A.R. Hulst, "עיר, City," in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, 882.

We [the wilderness generation] seized all his cities (עיר) at that time. There was not a city (קריה) which we did not seize from them, sixty cities (עיר), the whole region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. (Deut 3:4)

The terms are also used in poetic parallel, suggesting a close semantic relationship.

Several prophetic texts use the terms in poetic parallel:

Woe to the person who builds a city (עיר) with bloodshed,
and who establishes a city (קריה) on iniquity! (Hab 2:12)

- - -

How is the renowned city (עיר) forsaken,
the city (קריה) of my joy? (Jer 49:25)

Isaiah also uses the two terms in poetic parallel:

After these things you will be called the city (עיר) of righteousness,
the faithful city (קריה). (Isa 1:26b)

- - -

Full of noise, turbulent city (עיר),
exultant city (קריה). (Isa 22:2)

Finally, Isa 24–27 itself pairs the two terms in reference to the same entity:

For you have made the city (עיר) into a heap,
the fortified city (קריה) into a pile of ruins. (Isa 25:2a)

The point of these examples is simply to demonstrate that the nouns קריה and עיר have a close semantic relationship, as exemplified by their interchangeability in both prose narrative and in poetic parallelism. Therefore, unless there are grounds to think otherwise, it is reasonable to consider the two terms קריה and עיר to be stylistic variants in Isa 24–27.¹²

Despite this overlapping semantic range of the terms קריה and עיר, there are

¹² It appears that the Greek translator(s) of Isa 24–27 did not make a semantic distinction between the terms קריה and עיר, as the LXX renders both terms with πόλις (pl.) (except 27:10, which does not account for the Hebrew city term at all). The Greek also pluralises the city motif in Isa 24–27, either with the phrase πᾶσα πόλις (24:10) or the pl. noun πόλεις (24:12); the exception to this pluralising trend is 26:1, which maintains a singular "strong city." Although it is possible that this pluralising reflects a different *Vorlage*, it is more likely that the translator is responsible for the pluralisation. Excepting the Greek, there is considerable versional evidence for a singular reading (Cunha, LXX *Isaiah* 24:1–26:6, 67, 161).

indeed other grounds to identify separate entities behind the city-motif in Isa 24–27. This becomes clear as the motif appears with different modifiers and in different contexts. Thus עיר appears in the initial judgment announcement as a destroyed ruin (24:12), but later as a victorious "strong city" (26:1), and finally as a solitary, abandoned place (27:10). When one traces the city *Leitmotif* through these chapters, it becomes clear that, despite the synonymous uses of the terms קריה and עיר, Isa 24–27 uses the city-motif in more than one way. In fact, there are three separate referents for the city semantic group, between which a striking contrast emerges: the eschatological destroyed city (never to be rebuilt), the eschatological restored city (never to be destroyed), and the present punished city (whose fate hangs in the balance). There may have been an original geopolitical referent for one or more of these cities (e.g. Assyria, Babylon, Moab, Jerusalem, Samaria)—though in my view this does not seem likely—but they appear in the text as symbolic of humanity in relation to YHWH.¹³ The table below provides each occurrence in the context of its clause, along with an English gloss and label which identifies its use.

Movement 1			
24:10	נשברה קרית תהו	The city is broken down into chaos.	<i>destroyed city</i>
24:12	נשאר בעיר שמה	Destruction remains in the city.	<i>destroyed city</i>
25:2a	כי שמת מעיר לגל קריה בצורה למפלה	For you have made the city into a heap, the fortified city into a pile.	<i>destroyed city</i>

¹³ This metonymous use of the city image is seen frequently in prophetic literature. Karolien Vermeulen calls this literary device a *totum pro parte*, in which the part (the inhabitants) is replaced by the whole (the city as a physical, social, political entity) ("The Body of Nineveh: The Conceptual Image of the City in Nahum 2–3," *JHS* 17 [2017], 3).

25:2b	ארמון זרים מעיר לעולם לא יבנה	The foreign palace is no longer a city; it will never be rebuilt.	<i>destroyed city</i>
25:3	על כן יכבדוך עם עז קרית גוים עריצים ייראוך	Therefore, a strong people will glorify you; a city of ruthless nations will fear you.	<i>destroyed city</i>
Movement 2			
26:1	עיר עז לנו ישועה ישית חומות וחל	We have a strong city! He establishes salvation as walls and ramparts.	<i>restored city</i>
26:5	כי השח ישבי מרום קריה נשגבה	For he has lowered the inhabitants of the heights, the lofty city.	<i>destroyed city</i>
Movement 3			
27:10	כי עיר בצורה בדד נוה משלח ונעזב כמדבר	For the fortified city is alone, a habitation deserted and forsaken like the wilderness.	<i>forsaken city</i>

1. *The Destroyed City*. The city-motif first appears in Movement 1 (24:10), in the middle of the opening judgment announcement. As a part of a larger world judgment affecting the natural world, the city is beaten down into a chaos. Some commentators have suggested that different cities lie behind the motif (e.g. Babylon in 25:1–5 and a Moabite city in 26:1–6),¹⁴ and while this is a plausible postulation, there is nothing in the text that suggests it. In addition to the city (עיר or קריה) itself, the judgment announcement incorporates related urban terminology such as בית (*house*, 24:10), חוצות (*streets*, 24:11), שער (*gate*, 24:12), and ארמון (*palace*, 25:2).

This use of various urban terms is not unusual in ancient descriptions of a defeated city by the military victor. In fact, descriptions of fallen or "de-created"

¹⁴ Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 69.

cities are part of the stock language of royal propaganda. So, for example, the Bavian Inscription boasts that "the city [Babylon] and (its) houses, from its foundation to its top, I destroyed, I devastated, I burned with fire. The wall and outer wall, temples and gods, temple towers of brick and earth, as many as there were, I razed and dumped them into the Arahtu Canal."¹⁵ In ancient royal inscriptions like this one, which pile up images of utter destruction, the rhetoric is clearly an important element. The significance, therefore, lies not in their precise historical detail, but in their symbolic value.¹⁶ Although this pompous rhetoric may reflect the details of a particular invasion, its function is not to dispassionately record the details of a military campaign, but to bolster the text's claim of superiority through the destruction of enemy culture and identity. The demolition of a foreign city, famously celebrated in the royal inscriptions, "epitomizes the destruction of the enemy's civilization and cultural memory."¹⁷ Moreover, because cities are associated with political power, their destruction is tantamount to a claim of political impotence.

The Bavian Inscription continues its depiction of Babylon's destruction as a symbolic de-creation. Sennacherib boasts of digging canals through the middle of the city and flooding its very foundations: "I made its destruction surpass that of the Deluge. So that in the future, the site of that city and (its) temples will be unrecognizable, I dissolved it (Babylon) in water and annihilated (it), (making it) like a meadow."¹⁸ This put the city back into a primordial, watery void, an image which

¹⁵ Bavian Inscription (§341) trans. D.D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylon*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 152.

¹⁶ Jacob L. Wright, "Urbicide: The Ritualized Killing of Cities in the Ancient Near East," in *Ritual Violence in the Hebrew Bible: New Perspectives*, ed. Saul M. Olyan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 149.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Bavian Inscription (RINAP 3: 223 52–54), trans. A.K. Grayson and J. Novotny.

Isa 24 evokes with its depiction of the city being reduced to primordial chaos at the hands of the victor YHWH.¹⁹

The ancient city's "symbolic, emblematic, and mythological" role can also function in a more positive sense.²⁰ This symbolic importance can be seen in several Neo-Assyrian prophetic texts, in which cities are not merely geographic locations but ideological entities which are "embodiments of the divine presence and the king's reign."²¹ The point is that, because urban centres symbolised the cultural, political, and theological power of a nation, they become the object of the victor's triumph or the loser's lament (e.g. the book of Lamentations). Therefore, it is consistent with ancient Near Eastern symbolism to understand the nameless city of Isa 24–25 as representative of the identity and power of YHWH's enemies. This interpretation also helps explain the use of the plural "nations" in 25:3, *the city of ruthless nations* (קרית גוים עריצים). The reference to the fallen city in Isa 24–27 does not, therefore, refer to

¹⁹ Johnson argues that the city of Isa 24 is Jerusalem (on the eve of its destruction by Babylon). His cumulative case includes the lament tone of 24:7–12, the phrase "the joy of the earth" (24:11), and several lexical ties to texts about Jerusalem (*Chaos*, 29–35). Although the theme of Jerusalem's judgment is certainly important in the book of Isaiah, the evidence for Jerusalem as the city of Isa 24 is not persuasive. Johnson believes that "it is doubtful that the author [of Isa 24] would mourn the destruction of an enemy city" (29), but this view fails to consider the clear examples of prophetic lament over enemy nations (cf. Isa 15:5; 16:9–11; Jer 48:31, 36; Ezekiel is even instructed to raise a קינה [*lament*] over Tyre and Egypt [Ezek 27:3; 28:12; 32:2, 16]). Many of Johnson's lexical ties to Jerusalem are based on the woes of Isa 5. While I do not wish to deny an intertextual relationship between Isa 5 and Isa 24, the shared vocabulary is prophetic stock language and therefore cannot establish the Jerusalem-connection that Johnson seeks to make. The cessation of revelry is a common trope, used in curses and in oracles against Jerusalem and many other cities (e.g. Moab, Isa 16:19; cf. F. Charles Fensham, "Common Trends in Curses of the Ancient Near Eastern Treaties and *Kudurrû-Inscriptions* Compared with Maledictions of Amos and Isaiah," *ZAW* 75.2 [1963], 168, 171–72). In sum, while Johnson's argument points out some interesting literary parallels, ultimately the identification of the "city of chaos" in Isa 24 as Jerusalem is not tenable.

²⁰ Marti Nissinen, "City as Lofty as Heaven: Arbela and Other Cities in Neo-Assyrian Prophecy," in *'Every City Shall Be Forsaken': Urbanism and Prophecy in Ancient Israel and the Near East*, JSOTSup 330, ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Robert D. Haak (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 173, 208.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 173, 208.

any one city, but to the eschatological fate of every cultural, political, or religious entity which opposes YHWH's rule.²²

2. *The Strong City*. The second use of the city-motif—the restored, "strong" city—appears in Movement 2, which announces further details of "that day" of YHWH's enthronement. This city appears in the song of 26:1–6, which is placed in the mouths of the people of Judah, presumably including foreigners included at the eschatological banquet (25:6–9). There is a sharp contrast between this strong city and the destroyed city of the preceding judgment announcement. Whereas the fallen city's festive song (שיר) is silenced (24:9) and its singing (זמיר) laid low (25:5), the strong city sings its own song. And whereas the fallen city's houses are closed off from entry and its gates in a heap of rubble (24:10, 12; 25:12), the strong city's gates are standing open for entry (26:2). The contrast derives most fundamentally from the opposing attitudes of the two cities.²³ Whereas the fallen city was located "in the heights" and called "the lofty city" (i.e. pride), the restored city is strong not because of its self-reliance, but because of its dependence on YHWH (יֵצֵר סֻמוֹךְ / בֶּךָ בְּטוֹחַ). This dichotomous contrast is expressed within the song itself, which juxtaposes the "salvation" walls and open gates of the trusting city with the high fortified walls of the lofty city, which YHWH will lay low (cf. Chapter 5). The contrast emerges also with the preceding denouncement of the exemplar Moab (25:10–12).

²² In their "back to nature" passages, the biblical prophets sometimes seem to exhibit an "anti-urban animus," denouncing activities like lying on ivory beds, playing recreational music, and walking with minced step (Blenkinsopp, "Cityscape to Landscape: The 'Back to Nature' Theme in Isaiah 1–35," in *'Every City Shall Be Forsaken': Urbanism and Prophecy in Ancient Israel and the Near East*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Robert D. Haak, JSOTSup 330 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001], 39). However, this is doubtful in the case of Isa 24–27, given the judgment on agriculture, on the one hand, and the positive associations of the "strong city" praised in 26:1–4, on the other. Pace Paul Redditt, "Once Again, the City in Isaiah 24–27," *HAR* 10 (1986), 317–35.

²³ Plöger observes the common theme between the hymns (25:1–25 and 26:1–6), namely faith in YHWH, confirmed by the destruction of some enemy city (*Theocracy and Eschatology*, 69).

In addition to the rhetorical contrast between the two cities representing two attitudes toward YHWH, this strong yet dependent city is strongly reminiscent of descriptions of the new Jerusalem elsewhere in the book of Isaiah. In fact, the whole song of 26:1–6 contains terminology found elsewhere in Isaiah. The eschatological "strong city" of the song welcomes a righteous and faithful people, a direct reversal of the accusation of Isaiah's opening chapter, which both laments and promises restoration of Jerusalem's faithlessness:

Oh how the faithful city (קריה נאמנה) has become a prostitute,
full of justice, righteousness (צדק) resided within her, but now murderers!
(Isa 2:21)

After these things, you will be called the City of Righteousness (עיר הצדק),
Faithful City (קריה נאמנה) (Isa 2:26b).

Moreover, the open gates and walls of salvation evoke the description of the new Jerusalem of ch. 60:

60:11 And your gates will be open continually (ופתחו שעריך תמיד).

60:18 And your walls (חומתיו) will be called salvation (ישועה),
and your gates (ושעריך) praise.

This "strong," faithful city, therefore, contrasts with the immediately preceding fallen city, and also alludes to other Isaianic texts which promise the unfaithful Jerusalem's ultimate restoration. For this reason, the second identification of the city-motif in Isa 24–27 is the new Jerusalem.

Notice the contrasting attitudes between the two cities and their inhabitants, which illustrate the qualities of the faithful versus the rebellious. While the former are dependent—*poor*, *needy* (25:4), *wait for* God (25:9), and *trusting* (26:4), the latter are *ruthless* (25:5), *high* (26:5), and *proud* (25:11).

3. *The Desolate, Fortified City*. The final occurrence of the city represents a third use of the city-motif, namely the forsaken city of 27:9–11. Commentators are split between understanding the "fortified city" as a reference to Jerusalem (or Judah, Samaria, or the lost Northern tribes) or as a reference to YHWH's enemies.²⁴ The connection with the northern tribes is one of the major interpretations of the city, which takes the reference to Jacob and idolatry in 27:9 to be a reference to the Northern Kingdom or Samaria. However this reading is not justified, given that in Isaiah, Jacob and Israel refer to YHWH's people without reference to north or south.²⁵

The city in 27:10 is modified by the term *בצורה* (*fortified*), an adjective which could refer to Jerusalem or any number of other Judahite or foreign walled cities. While the fortified city of 27:10 does share some characteristics with the destroyed city from Isa 24 and 25, it cannot be identified with it for several reasons. First, unlike the previous two uses of the city-motif, the city of ch. 27 is not eschatological. Second, its description recalls depictions of Jerusalem from elsewhere in the book. And third, the following clause (v. 11) makes it clear that the city of 27:10 represents the people of God.

One detail which has been often overlooked in the discussion of this final city is how it differs from the previous two cities—both the destroyed city and the restored city—in its temporal setting. The third city, unlike the first two, is situated in

²⁴ E.g. Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 71–76; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 230; and Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 596–97, suggest that the city is Samaria, apparently based on the appearance of Jacob and heterodox cultic practices in 27:9. Some have explained this ambiguity as a reference to the Samaritans, since they represent a similar ambiguity in terms of their relationship to Israel. Bürki connects this fortified city with the destroyed "fortified city" (*קריה בצורה*) of 25:2, which along with the reference to the "sin of Jacob" in 27:9, "seems to be a clear attempt to relate the anonymous city with Samaria" ("City of Pride, City of Glory," 58).

²⁵ Jacob/Israel does not refer to the Northern Kingdom in Isaiah (especially Second Isaiah), but to the whole people of God, or the Judean community (Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 176, 187 n. 91).

the present time (from the perspective of the text), *not* in the eschatological future.²⁶

The claim of 27:10–11 is that the current negative situation is rooted in the spiritual ignorance of YHWH's people (v. 11, *This is not a people of knowledge*). This also strongly evokes the description of Israel in the opening chapter of Isaiah, in which the nation is compared to a beast of burden and accused of rebellion and spiritual ignorance: *ישראל לא ידע עמי לא התבונן* (*Israel does not know; my people do not understand* [1:3b]). In my view, the "fortified city" of 27:10–11 is clearly a reference to the people of God (as Jerusalem) in their current state.²⁷ This "fortified city" is punished but not destroyed—the very issue at stake in 27:7–11. The argument of Movement 3, in particular vv. 7ff., is that YHWH has a redemptive purpose for his harshness towards Israel, namely to atone for their sin and bring them back to spiritual fidelity. Though YHWH treats his people with harshness, and though the city Jerusalem is alone (cf. Isa 1:7–8), "on that day" its fate will be reversed, and it will be the centre of the eschatological gatherings of YHWH's people (27:12–12; cf. Isa 2:2–4; 11:10–11, 16; 14:1–2). This final appearance of the city, then, brings the temporal perspective back to present.

To summarise, the presentation of the city in Isa 24–27 includes three different referents, two eschatological and one present. The city motif puts into stark contrast two opposing fates for the different attitudes to YHWH's reign, and supports the text's portrayal of YHWH's preeminence on the world stage. Less recognised, however, is the third city of 27:10–11, which despite being misidentified with the

²⁶ This temporal distinction for 27:7–11 is based on the lack of the expression "on that day," which opens the eschatological portions of Isa 24–27, as well as the syntax of v. 10a and 11b (verbless clauses, which suggest present "tense"). Cf. Sweeney, "New Gleanings," 89.

²⁷ I find Van Grol's argument that the "fortified" city of Isa 27:10–11 is the people of God to be convincing ("Isaiah 27.10–11: God and His Own People," 195–209). See also Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 340, and Chapter 7 for a more detailed discussion of these verses.

Northern Kingdom or Samaria, represents the non-eschatological people of God. Distinct from the apocalyptic theme of the suffering righteous, Isa 24–27 concludes with a description of and allusion to the suffering of an unrighteous city. The city motif, therefore, has a discernible movement across Isa 24–27. In both prophecy and song, it first contrasts the two cities of the future—the destroyed enemy city that represents all who resist YHWH's rule, and the restored faithful city that represents all who rely on YHWH—and then describes the embattled city as evidence for the striving of YHWH, a city which presents the present situation of Jerusalem (or more generally the people of God). As the prayer stated, *if mercy is shown to the wicked, he will not learn righteousness* (26:10), so YHWH himself withholds mercy from the *desolate city*, his people (27:11).

This use of the city-motif to represent groups of people—more specifically, people with different attitudes toward the rule of YHWH—is consistent with the symbolic weight of the city-motif elsewhere in biblical prophecy and, as indicated above, in ancient Near Eastern mentality more generally. Whether boasting about the majesty of Nineveh's buildings and canals, or about the utter annihilation of an insubordinate city, the significance of the city in these texts goes far beyond its status as a physical habitation. The city represents the very identity of its people, its ruler, and its deity(s).

2.3. Death, Life, and New Creation

A third collection of related themes which unites Isa 24–27 is death and life, particularly expressed in terms of de-creation and re-creation. The most explicit statements that speak explicitly of death or recreation are the following:

25:8—YHWH will devour *death* (המות) forever.

26:14—They are dead (מתים); they will not live; they are *rephaim* (רפאים); they will not rise.²⁸

26:19—Your dead will live, as a corpse, they will rise.

The imagery of death and new creation is, however, thoroughly woven into the text far beyond these three verses. The opening judgment announcement speaks of a curse that "devours" the earth (24:6), evoking primordial disorder and describing a return to a state of pre-creation chaos.²⁹ The repeated use of the terms תבל and ארץ (together occurring 27 times in Isa 24–27, not counting the feminine pronouns with ארץ or תבל as their antecedent) envisions the destruction of the known world, affecting all of humanity.³⁰

As part of the divine de-creation of the world, Isa 24–27 repeatedly (7x) uses the verbal root פקד, most of which refer to decisive judgment.³¹

- 1) On that day, YHWH will punish (יפקד על) the hosts of heaven . . . and kings of earth (24:21), and after many days they will be punished (יפקדו [ni.]) (24:22).
- 2) They [other masters] are dead . . . to that end, you will punish them with destruction (פקדת ותשמידם) (26:14).
- 3) Look, YHWH is about to come out of his place to punish (לפקד) the earth's inhabitants for their sin (26:21).
- 4) On that day, YHWH will punish (יפקד על) Leviathan (27:1).

In the book of Isaiah, the verb פקד, when used with the sense of punishment (typically *qal*, collocated with על + direct object), is reserved for serious, worldwide

²⁸ See Chapter 6 for interpretive discussion of 26:14, 19 and the *rephaim*.

²⁹ Mauchline, *Isaiah 1–39*, 23; Ortlund, *Theophany and Chaostkampf*, 146–7. There are also resonances of the Genesis curse, including (unsuccessful) childbirth pains (Isa 26:18//Gen 3:16), banishment [שלח] (Isa 27:8//Gen 3:23), many of which are reversed in Isa 24–27: death (Isa 25:8//Gen 2:17), return to the dust (Isa 26:19//Gen 3:19), thorns and thistles (Isa 27:4//Gen 3:18), and perhaps even the defeat of the serpent [נחש] (Isa 27:1//Gen 3:14–15).

³⁰ If indeed the Noachic covenant is behind the reference to the "eternal covenant" (24:5//Gen 9:16) and the opened windows of heaven (24:18//Gen 7:11), then this further suggests an un-creation and recreation of the world, both humanity and nature. The death of plants and people across the world evokes the Noachic flood and contribute to the picture of the de-making of the cosmos.

³¹ Isa 24:21, 22; 26:14, 16, 21; 27:1, 3.

(or cosmic) judgments. Used this way, the root occurs only twice outside Isa 24–27, in reference to the arrogant king of Assyria (10:12) and, later, to the whole world (13:11).³² Thus, in the book of Isaiah, the objects of divine punishment (פָּקַד) are the Assyrian king, other unnamed kings, Israel's former (now dead) masters, wicked humanity at large, the "hosts of the heights," and Leviathan.

Concomitant with this destructive force in Isa 24–27, however, is the language of new creation. The appearance of Leviathan in 27:1 may contribute to the text's description of the new creation. The act of פָּקַד/slaying Leviathan, a mythical chaos creature, is a nod to the widespread ancient creation myth (especially Mesopotamia) in which the creator god slays the sea monster in creating the world.³³ If Isa 27:1 is evoking this chaos creature mythology, then it pushes the act of creation into the future. "On that day," YHWH, by defeating the great sea creature, will re-order chaos and re-create the world. This new creation receives a new "creation mandate" in the form of a promise: That, as an eschatological, restored vineyard, God's people will take root, blossom, and flourish, and fill the face of the world with fruit (Isa 27:6//Gen 1:28). And in direct contrast to the dead enemies of YHWH, whose memory is forever gone, YHWH's dead people will be brought back to life.³⁴ And reversing the curse on Adam, in which he is destined to return to the dust (עָפָר) from which he

³² The verbal root פָּקַד occurs 16x in the book of Isaiah, but only half of these occurrences refer to judgment. Cf. non-punishment uses like "muster" or "attend" (Isa 10:28; 13:4; 23:17; 29:6; 34:16; 38:10; 62:6).

³³ In the Babylonian creation myth *Enuma Elish*, the creator deity Marduk engages in a battle with Tiamat, and defeats her. The figure Tiamat is likely a personification of the sea and its powers, since the name Tiamat is derived from the common Akkadian term for the sea (*ti'amtum*). In support of this connection is the opening lines of the poem, which mention Tiamat's waters (Thorkild Jacobsen, "The Battle between Marduk and Tiamat," *JAOS* 88 [1968], 105).

³⁴ John Goldingay observes that these masters are not named, "ensuring that [the prophecy] doesn't unwittingly make its own statement deconstruct" (*The Theology of the Book of Isaiah* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014], 49).

came (Gen 3:19; cf. Gen 2:7), Isa 26:19b depicts the future life of YHWH's people as a new creation from the dust (עפר).³⁵

This concept of an eschatological new creation in Isa 24–27 has several interesting connections with the more fully developed restored Jerusalem and "new heavens and new earth" of Isa 40–66. Although the precise phrase "new earth" is not used in "First-Isaiah," Isa 24–27 nonetheless looks forward to a new world order similar to the new Jerusalem in Isa 60. It is suggestive that, in Isa 24–27, YHWH speaks three times: the first time is a message of judgment, via a divine speech formula (24:3). The second time is a message of comfort and hope, also via a divine speech formula (25:8). And the third time, YHWH speaks—sings, in fact—directly (27:3–6). Without positing a direct relationship with YHWH's speeches in chs. 40ff., this progression of divine speech—from reported divine speech of judgment and restoration, to direct first-person lyrics—reflects the theological progression of the book in broad strokes and anticipates the direct speech of YHWH and the fuller expression of the "new creation" theme in the later chapters of the book. The community expresses a hope in waking up (קִיץ) and rising up (קום) from the dust (עפר) (26:19), later spoken to Jerusalem as an invitation to wake up (impv. עורי) and rise (קום) from the dust (עפר) (Isa 52:1–2). This new created order is closely tied with the eschatological reign of YHWH, the final theme to which we now turn.

³⁵ In addition to de-creation and re-creation, Isa 24–27 features a number of other opposing pairs, including: scattering//gathering (24:1//27:12–13), emptying the earth//filling the earth (24:3//27:6), singing silenced//singing expressed (24:8–9//26:1; 27:2); remnant gleanings//gathered gleanings (24:14; 27:12); mourning//no tears (24:4; 25:8); and not rising//rising (24:20; 26:14; 27:9//26:19).

2.4. The Sovereignty of YHWH

The final unifying theme of Isa 24–27 is the rule of YHWH, which plays a major part in each of the three movements of the composition. The opening announcement of judgment drives toward the climactic statement that YHWH of hosts will rule (מֶלֶךְ) without rival on Mt. Zion (24:23). The military imagery used in vv. 1–20 presents YHWH as an invading king who, after subduing his competition, sits down to rule from his capital (24:23). The prophetic description of worldwide catastrophe attributes the horrifying circumstances to the hand of Israel's God, who will ultimately bring order to his domain by vanquishing human and non-human dissidents as he establishes his reign in Jerusalem. Movement 2 describes YHWH's actions at his regnal banquet, where he comforts his people and pronounces judgment on his enemies (personified as Moab, 25:6–12). The passage reverses the well-known trope of "death as devourer" by making YHWH devour death, perhaps with a polemical tone against the mythical expression of the trope in the Baal cycle.³⁶ Finally, YHWH speaks in Movement 3 to restore his vineyard and to offer asylum to anyone who would find refuge in his protection (in contrast to those fleeing to Egypt for the protection of pharaoh, cf. Isa 30:2–3). The final statement announces the *shofar* summons for all YHWH's scattered people from within and without the land of Israel to do obeisance to him on the holy mountain Jerusalem.

In Isa 24–27, YHWH is portrayed as the ideal king, similar to the former prophetic portrayal of David—both victorious over contenders to the throne and benevolent. And since "the Baal cycle describes a competition among the gods for

³⁶ In the Ugaritic Baal mythology, *Mot* devours king Baal out of resentment for not receiving an invitation to Baal's royal banquet. See Chapter 5 for further discussion of the possible relationship between Isa 25:6–8 and other ancient sources.

kingship," which Baal wins "through his overcoming Yamm and Mot and through the acquisition of his own palace,"³⁷ it is not difficult to imagine polemical overtones in Isa 24–27. Loyalty to YHWH is the only choice given in Isa 24–27, since in its portrayal of the world, the final eschatological reality will be YHWH of hosts reigning on Mt. Zion in glory.

³⁷ Mark S. Smith, "Interpreting the Baal Cycle," *UF* 18 (1986), 323.

CHAPTER 9 IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

1. Thesis Implications

The focus of this study has been the features of Isa 24–27 which unify the chapters as a literary discourse. The results of this study have ramifications for addressing other critical issues in Isa 24–27. This final chapter will discuss the question of literary genre and will reflect on how this study bears on reading the book of Isaiah.

1.1. Literary Genre

As discussed in Chapter 1, the question of literary genre has featured prominently in the study of Isa 24–27. The generic forms of sub-sections have been considered at the relevant points in the analysis above, but it remains to revisit the genre question as it pertains the composition as a whole. Since the second half of the 19th century, Isa 24–27 has been strongly associated with "apocalyptic" writing, often as the "Isaiah Apocalypse."¹ Although other genre proposals like cantata (Lindblom) have been offered, they have not gained such widespread support as "apocalypse." In recent decades, the adjectives "early" or "proto—" have been added to the apocalyptic

¹ Cf. Chapter 1, which noted Duhm's role in popularising the "apocalyptic" label for Isa 24–27, an interpretive tradition which has been perpetuated through the moniker "The Isaiah Apocalypse" (*Jesaia*, 143). Other proponents of the "apocalypse" label include Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 178 (He calls the section "The Apocalypse of Isaiah" and, although finding proto-apoc and eschatological layers, also finds "more advanced apocalyptic speculation" in others); G.H. Box, *The Book of Isaiah: Translated from a Text Revised in Accordance with the Results of Recent Criticism* (New York: Macmillan, 1909), 112. For an argument regarding the development of apocalyptic influence in the whole book, see Bernhard W. Anderson, "The Apocalyptic Rendering of the Isaiah Tradition," in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism: Essays in Tribute to Howard Clark Kee*, ed. J. Neusner, et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 17–38.

label.² Given the synchronic interests of the present study, the question is one of *literary genre*, not of apocalypticism as a historical movement or social ideology.³

Because the term *apocalyptic* has a complicated history in biblical scholarship, it must suffice here to use the 1979 SBL definition for the literary genre of apocalypse:

A genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.⁴

² The "early/proto-apocalyptic" proponents include: F.M. Cross, *New Directions in the Study of Apocalyptic*, in *JTC* 6 (1969), 159 n. 3 ("proto-apocalyptic"); Paul Redditt, "Isaiah 24–27: A Form Critical Analysis" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1972), 310; Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 196–97 (still uses the title "Apocalypse of Isaiah" for convenience, but admits chs. 24–27 cannot be considered a true apocalypse, but "represent an important stage of hermeneutical development between prophecy and apocalyptic and thus form a bridge between the prophetic books of the Old Testament and the later apocalypses of the intertestamental period"); Sawyer notes affinities with later apocalypses, and says it is "apocalyptic" in the sense of being concerned about the end of the world. However, the composition is missing other apocalyptic features like angels, symbolic numbers, patterns in history, visionary and mystical reports. On this basis, the chapters have the "seeds of apocalyptic eschatology" but are still prophecy (*Isaiah*, 204); Doyle, *Metaphorically Speaking*, 27 (proto-apocalyptic); Polaski, *Authorizing an End* (uses "proto-apocalyptic" as a label for "texts which bear some resemblance to later apocalyptic texts but are not yet fully-formed apocalypses" (1), but rejects the formal literary genre designation as an apocalypse (51). He also notes the ironic appropriateness for the "unstable" ground of Isa 24–27 between the classical prophet Isaiah and the true apocalypses [51]). Konrad Schmid, "The Book of Isaiah," in *T&T Clark Handbook of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Literature, Religion and History of the Old Testament* (2012), 413–14 ("the later genre of *apocalyptic literature* drew crucial inspiration from these cosmic declarations of judgment" 414).

A few dismiss the apocalyptic label altogether: John Goldingay, for example, recently stated that Isa 24–27 "is no more an apocalypse, a visionary revelation, than other parts of the book" (*The Theology of the Book of Isaiah* [Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014], 46). Other include Hays and Irvine, *Eighth-Century Prophet*, 297–99; Johnson, *Chaos*, 100; Hays, *Origins of Isaiah 24–27*, 24–51; Barker, *Isaiah's Kingship Polemic*, 203, 218; Lindblom, "cantata" (*Jesaja-Apokalypse*, the purpose for Lindblom was to celebrate a festive occasion for the Jewish community [some destruction of an enemy state]; historically placed at the destruction of Babylon by Xerxes I after the revolt of 485 B.C.E.).

³ For clarification of these related by conceptually distinct terms, see Paul Hanson, "Apocalypticism," *IDBSup*, ed. Keith Crim (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 28–34.

⁴ John J. Collins, "Towards the Morphology of a Genre: Introduction," *Semeia* 14 (1979), 9. Cf. John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1984); and A. Kirk Grayson and John J. Collins, "Apocalypses and Apocalypticism," *ABD* 1:279–88.

This definition speaks to both the literary form and content of the genre, and is intended to be inclusive enough to describe all generally accepted apocalypses.⁵ Although this definition does not attempt to include the genre's function, a function clause was later proposed: "intended for a group in crisis with the purpose of exhortation and/or consolation by means of divine authority."⁶ Other common features of apocalypses include pseudonymity, periodisation, historical determinism, mythical references, coded speech, dualism, and number symbolism, but no single exemplar of the genre displays all of these features.

Turning to Isa 24–27, it is important, therefore, to move past merely listing generic features and to evaluate their place in the structure and overarching message of the composition. Isa 24–27 does not receive its own superscription with explicit literary designation, such as the terms *חזון* (*vision*, Isa 1:1), *מִשָּׁא* (*oracle*, 13:1), or *הוֹי* (*woe oracle*) (28:1).⁷ The composition does, however, have generic phrases throughout the text, including "this word [דְּבַר] (of YHWH)," YHWH has spoken, and "song." Isa 24–27 is clearly a type of revelatory literature, an essential quality it

⁵ Unlike some earlier definitions of the apocalyptic literary genre (e.g. Koch, Gammie), this definition was intended to apply to all apocalypses ("the definition above is constitutive of all apocalypses and indicates the common core of the genre" [Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 5]. Hence the inclusion of both the *temporal* and the *spatial* elements in the SBL definition. Often a given apocalypse is more "historical" (eschatologically-focused) or more "cosmic" (spatially-focused), but both characteristics are included in the genre. The spatial dynamic was stressed by Michael Stone, "Lists of Revealed Things in the Apocalyptic Literature," in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God; Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 414–52; and Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982). Cf. John Barton, *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 253–57.

⁶ David Hellholm, "The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John," *Semeia* 36 (1986), 27.

⁷ A helpful distinction between *emic* and *etic* can be applied to literary genres, in which the former refers to terminology used by the texts themselves, and the latter to terminology used by later readers for taxonomic purposes. Although modern scholars often make such *etic* genre distinctions, i.e. use labels the ancient writers did not themselves use, this does not imply an anachronistic reading (Adela Yarbro Collins, "Apocalypse Now: The State of Apocalyptic Studies Near the End of the First Decade of the Twenty-First Century," *HTR* 104.4 [2011], 451).

shares with apocalypses, prophecy, and other kinds of divinatory literature. It is less clear, however, whether its *framework* is narrative. Commentators have long observed that, if the songs are excised from Isa 24–27, a prophetic (apocalyptic?) core remains (or discourse "mainline," to use synchronic terminology) which features YHWH and his actions on Mt. Zion. This non-lyrical framework of Isa 24–27, however, consists of future-oriented *w^eqatal* verb chains, other predictive verbal forms like הנה + participle, and ביום ההוא (והיה) + *yiqtol*, which creates a "discursive and predictive" literary framework.⁸ Even if one defines these verbs as a sort of future-narration, I have argued that the non-lyrical sections of Isa 24–27 are not chronological in the sense of narrating a sequence of events.

Notice the difference between the future-oriented discourse framework of Isa 24–27, on the one hand, and the narrative framework of apocalyptic selections from Daniel and Zechariah, on the other:

Look, YHWH is about to empty the earth (*qotel*) . . . And it will happen (*w^eqatal*) on that day that YHWH will punish (*yiqtol*) the hosts of the heights . . . And YHWH of hosts will prepare (*w^eqatal*) a feast. (Isa 24:1, 21; 25:6)

And when I, Daniel, had seen (*wayyiqtol* + infin.) the vision, I sought (*wayyiqtol*) understanding, and right there in front of me was standing something that looked like a man. And I heard (*wayyiqtol*) a man's voice . . . and it called out (*wayyiqtol*), "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision" . . . And when he approached, I was terrified (*qatal*) and fell (*wayyiqtol*) on my face. And he said (*wayyiqtol*) to me, "Understand, son of man, that the vision is about the time of the end." (Dan 8:15–17)

And I lifted (*wayyiqtol*) my eyes, and I saw (*wayyiqtol*)—right there—four horns. And I said (*wayyiqtol*) to the angel who was speaking to me, "What are these?" And he said (*wayyiqtol*) to me, "These are the horns which scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." (Zech 2:1–2 [1:18–19])

⁸ Bosman, "Syntactic Cohesion," 30–31.

The verbal framework of Isa 24–27 is predictive, opening with *qotel* and continuing the mainline with *w^eqatal* and *yiqtol* verbal forms, whereas the verbal framework of the true apocalypses is narrativial, appearing in the narrative *qatal/wayyiqtol* pattern in the examples from Daniel and Zechariah. Notice also that the apocalypses mention the vision, whereas Isa 24–27 does not mention a seer or vision.⁹

The second part of the SBL definition refers to the *mediation* of an otherworldly being. The presence of an otherworldly interpreter or guide is a "constant element" in the genre (e.g. see Dan 8:15–17; Zech 2:1–2 above).¹⁰ There is no such interpreter in Isa 24–27, and the conduit of the divine message is the (human) prophetic voice. And, unlike apocalyptic revelation, which meaning remains veiled until it is interpreted, the voice of Isa 24–27 speaks directly, without interpretation, and with the assumption that understanding is possible without divine aid.¹¹ In fact, Isa 24–27 contains two prophetic divine speech formulas (24:3; 25:8), which are prophetic rather than apocalyptic.

The third part of the SBL definition addresses the *eschatological orientation* of apocalyptic literature. This temporal dynamic is shared with Isa 24–27 because, like apocalypses, the composition is temporal in that it envisages eschatological salvation. The utopian scenes of complete devotion to YHWH on Mt. Zion express a hope that looks forward to an eschatological ideal, although the degree to which this reality leaves the plane of history is debated.

⁹ Sawyer, *Isaiah*, 204.

¹⁰ Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 4. Frequently these mediatorial figures are named, e.g. Michael and others in the Qumran War Scrolls (1QM IX, 15; XVII, 6–8); Suru'el, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Gabriel, and Uriel in *1 Enoch* (20.17; 21.5); Yahoel in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (10.3–17); and Eremiel in the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* (6.11–17).

¹¹ See Chapter 4 for discussion of the term רָאָה (Isa 24:16).

In regards to the *other elements* commonly seen in apocalypses, Isa 24–27 is not pseudonymous, unless one considers inclusion in the Isaiah corpus as a claim to authorship. The first-person voice in the composition remains nameless (24:16b; 25:1). Similarly, there is no periodisation, historical determinism, or number symbolism in Isa 24–27. The brief mention of Leviathan in 27:1, which includes an almost verbatim correspondence to the Ugaritic Baal Cycle, is more like other prophetic allusions to chaos creatures from ancient mythology (e.g. *Rahab*, Isa 30:7; 51:9; Ps 89:11 [10]; Job 26:12) than to the composite beasts of Daniel.¹² Leviathan does appear in *1 Enoch* along with the beast Behemoth (*1 En.* 60. 7–8) but the setting is very different, with the angel Michael as intermediary, speaking of the "elect" and "hidden things."¹³ Leviathan in Isa 27 is best explained in light of the composition's theme of new creation, in which YHWH slays the chaos creature of yore.

It is noteworthy that, despite the absence of an angelic guide, Isa 24–27 does allude to other spiritual entities and describes their ultimate fate in apocalyptic-sounding terms. The first "in that day" section (24:21–23) announces the coming vanquishment of both earthly ("kings of the earth") and otherworldly rulers ("hosts of the heights"). This merism depicts the preeminence of YHWH, but remains allusive in regards to the identity of these non-earthly powers.¹⁴ They are, however, thrown into

¹² The apocalypse of John speaks of an ancient serpent, reflecting the later idea of a personified devil: ὁ δράκων ὁ μέγας, ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος, ὁ καλούμενος Διάβολος καὶ ὁ Σατανᾶς, ὁ πλανῶν τὴν οἰκουμένην ὅλην (Rev 12:9a).

¹³ "On that day, two monsters will be parted—one monster, a female named Leviathan, in order to dwell in the abyss of the ocean over the fountains of water, and (the other), a male called Behemoth, which holds his chest in an invisible desert whose name is Dundayin, east of the garden of Eden, wherein the elect and the righteous ones dwell, wherein my grandfather was taken, the seventh from Adam" (*1 En* 60.7–8, trans. E. Issac, *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, vol. 1, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983], 40).

¹⁴ Some have suggested astral deities or patron angels (cf. Daniel; *1 Enoch* includes several texts with extended visionary narratives of stars' transgressions and eventual judgment (cf. 21.3–6; 88.1; and 90.24).

a pit (cf. Rev. 20:1–3; *I En.* 10.13–14; 18.14–15). A second possible reference to spiritual beings is the "other masters" of 26:13–14, which as argued above are identified with *rephaim* in the text. These opaque references to spiritual beings in Isa 24–27 are hostile forces which, although anticipating apocalyptic themes, certainly do not refer to angelic interpreters or guides.

Perhaps the strongest possible link between Isa 24–27 and apocalyptic literature is the idea of resurrection.¹⁵ The interpretation of Isa 26:19, i.e. the "*resurrection*" statement (cf. 25:8), is often compared with the belief in the resurrection of the dead expressed in Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity.¹⁶ Usually a physical interpretation of Isa 26:19 is tied to reading the text as apocalyptic, and a metaphorical interpretation of the verse is tied to a prophetic (or pre-apocalyptic) reading of the text. The discussion above proposed that "your dead" (מתיך) refers to YHWH's people whom he has killed, either literally or metaphorically (Chapter 6). Within the context of communal prayer and polemic against foreign deities, of which 26:19 is the final statement, the resurrection has a national scope. The text is concerned with "his people" (25:8), the land of Judah (26:1), the nation of YHWH (26:15), and Jacob/Israel (27:6, 9). And while righteousness and piety are encouraged, Isa 24–27 is concerned with the nation, not with a group of elect. And the later apocalyptic view of a general resurrection and judgment is not expressed here, since in Isa 26 the *rephaim* "will not live/rise" (26:14).¹⁷

¹⁵ According to Collins, the most reliable criterion for differentiating between Jewish prophecy and Jewish/early Christian apocalypticism is the literal transcendence of death ("Apocalyptic Eschatology as the Transcendence of Death," *CBQ* 36 [1974], 21–43).

¹⁶ Cf. Ezek 37:7–10; Dan 12:1–3; *I Enoch* 22:13; the *Hodayot*; Ps Sol 2:31; 3:10–12; 2 Maccabees 7; 4Q521 ("The Messianic Apocalypse"); *Pseudo-Ezekiel*; the second of the "Eighteen Blessings" (*Shemoneh Esreh*); Rev 21:4; 1 Cor 15:52–53; 1 Thess 4:16–17.

¹⁷ George W.E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental*

One final characteristic of apocalyptic literature which stems from Hellholm's *function* clause is that it often speaks to an embattled but faithful community. Associated elements includes the exhortation to endure persecution and to resist assimilation to the ungodly culture.¹⁸ It is not apparent in Isa 24–27, however, that the suffering is due to the people's faithfulness. It is clear that the "inhabitants of the earth" suffer for their transgression. But the suffering of the community (past and present) is portrayed as divine discipline for sin, infidelity, and spiritual ignorance (including the use of Asherim and other heterodox cultic pieces, 27:7–11). The theme of righteous suffering that runs through apocalyptic literature is not seen in Isa 24–27, which envisions the idealised future *not* as a reward for the pious, but as the institution of the uncontested reign of YHWH.¹⁹

To conclude, although sharing some significant features with apocalyptic literature, Isa 24–27 cannot be considered a true literary apocalypse. The purpose of genre identification is to aid interpretation by shaping readerly expectations. The literary conventions associated with genre "furnish a specific hermeneutical strategy

Judaism and Early Christianity, HTS 56, expan. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 32. A similar view of partial resurrection is expressed in Dan 12:2.

¹⁸ E.g. The Greek Esther is framed by two "apocalyptic" additions, and it shows an increased concern to protect Jewish distinctiveness. The apocalyptic additions depict Mordecai's terrifying dream and its interpretation, which includes dragons representing Mordecai and Haman. Addition A is sometimes called Mordecai's Apocalypse, although the technical label "apocalypse" is debated. One effect of these apocalyptic additions is to reframe the intervening narrative as divinely orchestrated, revealed to the visionary beforehand (Karen Jobes, *The Alpha-Text of Esther: Its Character and Relationship to the Masoretic Text*, SBL Dissertation Series 153 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996], 185, 191, 227).

Esther's prayer (addition C) presents a distinctly pious version of her character (when compared to MT): "You have knowledge of everything, and you know that I hate the glory of the lawless and abhor the bed of the uncircumcised and of any foreigner. You know my predicament—that I abhor the sign of my proud position . . . Your slave has not eaten at Haman's table, and I have not honored the king's banquet nor drunk the wine of libations. Your slave has not rejoiced since the day of my change until now, except in you, O Lord, God of Abraam" (vv. 25–29, OG [NETS]).

¹⁹ Early receptions of the text, however, reflect an increasing concern for eschatological reward and punishment (e.g. Targum Isa 24:16).

that guides [readers] through the composition."²⁰ Genre-recognition, therefore, is a guide and constraint on meaning. It follows that a misidentification of genre has consequences for interpretation. The genre "apocalypse" carries with it a particular set of literary qualities (e.g. fantastic composite beasts) that signal a particular way of interpretation (e.g. fantastic composite beasts representing the rise and fall of imperial powers). Although Isa 24–27 is a remarkably dramatic, symbolic text that shares several features with literary apocalypses, ultimately it cannot be considered an apocalypse since it is lacking essential elements of apocalyptic literature and since it displays additional characteristics that correspond to prophecy.²¹ The cosmic scope and eschatological orientation that characterise Isa 24–27 are necessary, but not sufficient, components of literary apocalypses. The supposed vagueness and cosmic scope of Isa 24–27 has less to do with an apocalyptic "universalisation" and more to do with its function as a theological summary of the preceding chapters of the book. This idea of a "theological summary" requires recourse to a second important question in the study of Isa 24–27, namely the larger literary context, to which we now turn.

1.2. *Sitz im Buch*

The literary order of the book is important, since it is how the book presents itself, and "demands that one abandon all previous knowledge brought from outside that immediately isolates the book into components of diverse origin, namely into small

²⁰ Ernst Wendland, "Genre Criticism and the Psalms: What Discourse Typology Can Tell Us about the Text (with Special Reference to Psalm 31)," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. Robert Bergen (Dallas: SIL, 1994), 379.

²¹ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 368; Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 602.

units and additions, as well as genuine and non-genuine passages."²² The richly intertextual quality of Isa 24–27 has received considerable attention in recent years (see Chapter 1), so the following reflections will focus on the macro-structural relationships.²³ The effect of the literary position of Isa 24–27 is that it appears as a response or conclusion to the nations oracles of Isaiah (chs. 13–23).²⁴ More precisely, many have observed a "universalising" tendency in the composition, particularly in its citation of other texts, whether from Isaiah or other biblical texts.²⁵ There are good reasons for this "universalising" assessment, not least of which is the obvious shift of scope at ch. 24 from particular nation-states to all "inhabitants of the earth." Contributing to this universalising sense is the reappropriation of several more specific texts for the universal message of Isa 24–27 (cf. Isa 17:6//Isa 24:13).²⁶

However, Isa 24–27 does not only universalise foreign nation oracles, but also summarises and develops the universal themes already expressed in chs. 1–23.²⁷ The first *massa* oracle (ch. 13), for example, features similar language of worldwide judgment. This creates a sort of cosmic frame around chs. 13–27. Although its

²² Odil Steck, *Prophetic Books and Their Theological Witness*, trans. James Nogalski (St. Louis: Chalice, 2000), 22–23.

²³ I am concerned with the effect of Isa 24–27 in the completed book, so even though an earlier chapter in the book may be "younger" or dependent on a later chapter in the book, "from a synchronic perspective it anticipates or adumbrates the latter within the book of Isaiah" (Richard Schultz, *The Search for Quotation: Verbal Parallels in the Prophets*, JSOTSup 180 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999], 234). Schultz begins with the effect of a quotation within its literary presentation, and then considers how this effect may indicate editorial *purpose*.

²⁴ E.g. Clements: "Chs. 24–27 are not to be understood solely for themselves but as a guide to the way in which the preceding foreign nation prophecies are to be understood" (*Isaiah 1–39*, 197).

²⁵ Sweeney, "Textual Citations," 51; Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 69, 89, 118.

²⁶ One example from Hibbard's analysis is Jer 48:43, an oracle against Moab which he argues is "universalized" [in Isa 24:17] and made to refer to an eschatological time of judgment encompassing the whole earth" (*Intertextuality*, 54; cf. 213, 216).

²⁷ Sweeney: Isa 24–27 forms "a conclusion to both 5–12 and 13–23 since the announcement of the new world order resolves the problems of the punishment of Israel/Judah and the punishment of the nations by demonstrating the end to which the punishment is directed, YHWH's rule of Israel/Jacob and the nations from Zion" (*Isaiah 1–4*, 62).

superscription (v. 1) ties the oracle to Babylon, it speaks of the "day of YHWH" in the same cosmic language as Isa 24–27, with armies from the edges of the heavens (מקצה השמים) coming to destroy the whole earth (כל הארץ, later תבל) (13:5). The judgment of ch. 13 also describes the day of YHWH as making the land desolate (13:9), punishing the world for its evil (13:11), thinning out the human population (13:12), darkening the luminaries (13:10), making the earth shake (13:13), and laying low the pride of the arrogant (13:11), all elements of the world judgment of Isa 24–27.

This theme of world judgment frames chs. 13–27, but is not limited to these chapters. The theme appears near the beginning of the book and again at the end of "First-Isaiah." The depiction of the "day" of YHWH in Isa 2 is programmatic, and its repetition of all (כל) ignores distinctions of nationality, time, or anything else. This oracle announces the lowering of all the lofty terminology that is picked up in ch. 13 and in chs. 24–27. The end of "First-Isaiah" creates a larger frame with its diptych representing the de-creation (ch. 34) and recreation (ch. 35) of the earth.²⁸ Although ch. 34, like ch. 13, pertains to a particular nation (Edom), the specific judgment is expanded to include the entire cosmos (peoples, the earth, the world, all nations and their hosts). If the latter three "world judgment" passages are compared, they each mention the judgment of all nations, the defeat of the celestial bodies, and illustrate the universal judgment with a specific national enemy of Israel (13–Babylon, 25–Moab, 34–Edom).²⁹ Therefore, the universal judgment theme that features prominently in Isa 24–27 is not a strictly unique "universalisation" of local oracles,

²⁸ In particular, the measuring line of chaos (תהו) and the stones of turmoil (בהו) (Isa 34:11b) is decreation language, "and the implication is that Yahweh is engaged in a work of uncreation" (Blenkinsopp, "Cityscape to Landscape," 42).

²⁹ Neil O. Skjoldal, "The Function of Isaiah 24–27," *JETS* 36.2 (1993), 171. Isaiah 2:6–22 does not mention the darkening of the luminaries, but it nonetheless speaks in universal terms, beginning with "Jacob" (2:6) and broadening to "all that is proud and lofty" (2:12).

but rather an integral development of the universal scope of judgment (and redemption) incipient in Isa 1–39. As a theological "commentary" at the end of the oracles about the nations, Isa 24–27 characterises YHWH as transcendently sovereign over not only human kings, but spiritual ones. It characterises the faithful community as essentially dependent and trusting in YHWH's protection (versus the prideful enemies), and through its hymns and prayer presents the opportunity for its readers to express the attitude of trust which it holds forth.

A second feature which occurs at macro-structural boundaries and which integrates Isa 24–27 into the book of Isaiah is the presence of hymnic passages. The hymns (fragments) in ch. 12 conclude the first section of the book (chs. 1–12), and similarly the hymns of chs. 24–27 conclude the second major section of the book (chs. 13–27). The concluding role of hymns is known from narrative texts and other literary texts both biblical and non-biblical. The literary convention of embedding hymns or other lyrical material in prose is well-documented, and in particular, "the frequent resort to psalmody for narrative *closure* suggests that ancient Hebrew writers and editors found some inherent advantage in its use" (including the invitation for reader to join the celebration [Exod 15; Judg 5; Judith 16]).³⁰ Besides the possible liturgical use, these hymns take up major themes in the narratives and oracles of Isaiah in an emotive way to inspire loyalty to YHWH by characterising him as a protector and saviour, and his people as needy and trusting.

The third theme that also tends to appear at the major structural junctions is the regathering of God's people to Zion. As a main theme of ch. 11, this repatriation

³⁰ Watts, *Psalm and Story*, 187, emphasis added.

theme concludes the oracles of the first section of the book (just before the hymns of ch. 12), and it is also the final statement of ch. 27 and the end of the second section. The regathering theme can also be found at the opening of "Third-Isaiah" (56:8).

Lastly, Isa 24–27 is a climactic statement of YHWH's kingship, a theme which is central to chs. 1–23³¹. Besides the throne room vision of ch. 6, the theme of YHWH's reign is expressed through a number of different motifs, including the Mt. Zion topos and the exhortation to trust him for aid. The denomination Mount Zion (הַר צִיּוֹן) appears only in "First-Isaiah," is absent from chs. 40–55, and reappears as the "holy mountain" in chs. 56–66.³² Isa 24–27 uses both terms for the locus of divine rule, opening with the former term (Mt. Zion [24:23], this mountain [25:6, 7, 10]), and closing with the latter term (the holy mountain [27:13]). In the book of Isaiah, the eschatological mountain where YHWH rules is the site of both judgment and restoration. Thus Isa 24–27 looks back to the programmatic mountaintop scene of ch. 2, with both texts depicting the mountain as the eschatological gathering place not just for Israel, but for all nations, ceasing wars (2:4) and devouring death (25:8). Chs. 24–27 also look back to the mountaintop scene of ch. 4, in which YHWH's presence will purify Jerusalem with burning (4:4) and will constitute a shade from heat and shelter from the storm (4:5–6; 25:4). Chs. 24–27 also recall the mountaintop scene of ch. 11, which portrays an idealised reign of a davidic ruler in which there is complete peace, spiritual knowledge on "my holy mountain," and a repatriated remnant.

³¹ Hibbard observes in the prophetic corpus a somewhat surprising infrequency of the idea of YHWH as king. He compares Isa 24:23 with "king" texts Ezek 20:33, Mic 4:6–7, and Isa 52:7, and concludes that only the Isaiah text was likely used in Isa 24. He does not mention Isa 32:1 or several other prophetic texts which use the nominal form of מֶלֶךְ (*Intertextuality*, 86–92).

³² The name הַר צִיּוֹן appears eight times (and *this mountain* three), all in "First-Isaiah." The name does not appear at all in chs. 40–55, but reappears as הַר קְדְשִׁי (*my holy mountain*) in chs. 56–66 (56:7; 57:13; 65:25; 66:20).

(Mount) Zion appears briefly in the oracles about the nations, either as a place of refuge (14:32) or of the nations' tribute to YHWH (18:7). Consistent with these depictions of the eschatological mountain, it appears in Isa 24–27 as the locus of YHWH's reign "on that day" (24:23), at which he will welcome all nations to a royal feast (25:6–8) and will receive the worship of his repatriated people (27:12–13).³³

The mountain is not featured in chs. 40–55, but the kingship theme is still present (41:21; 43:15; 44:6; 52:7).³⁴ The mountain of YHWH appears again in ch. 56 as the place where faithful Gentiles and Israelites come to worship (56:7–8). And in the closing vision of the new heavens and new earth, it appears once again as the place of peace (65:25; echoing ch. 11) and of gathering to worship (66:20–23).

Isaiah 24–27 stands out as a uniquely beautiful and terrifying composition, but it nonetheless exhibits features which connect it to its "First-Isaiah" setting as well as point forward to the themes of the latter chapters of the book. The effect of Isa 24–27 as a conclusion to both the nations oracles and the early chapters of Isaiah is that, in the midst of a complicated international scene, there is a "larger pattern within God's eschatological purpose."³⁵ The text, in its cosmic scope and sometimes frustrating vagueness, presents itself as a theological summary of all these diverse oracles to different peoples, including Jerusalem itself. Isaiah 24–27 is thematic in character, drawing from and developing earlier prophetic hopes, with its focus on

³³ These final verses of Isa 27 appear to be an allusion to the "gathering" passage in ch. 11. This "second gathering" is from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and the coastlands of the sea. Isaiah 11:12 describes the gathered people as "banished" (נִדְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) and "scattered" (נִפְצָוֹת), the first of which is used in Isa 27:13 (הַנִּדְחִים בְּאַרְצָא). Rather than understanding 27:13 as a reference only to Egypt and Assyria, I think it is best understood as a shorthand reference to the furthest reaches of the world, the great powers of which cannot prevent the return of God's people.

³⁴ Although the mountain motif is missing from Isa 40–55, (daughter) Zion is still an important figure (40:9; 41:27; 46:13; 49:14; 51:3; 51:11, 16; 52:1, 2, 7, 8).

³⁵ Childs, *Isaiah*, 174.

theological claims that transcend any given nation or situation.³⁶ As a "theological commentary" it draws out theological implications from the preceding chapters without specifying a particular historical moment. For the composer of Isa 24–27, any and every "other master" is destined for destruction, their anonymity already fulfilling the community's hope that YHWH would wipe out all memory of them (26:14). The anonymity of the enemy in Isa 24–27 is the very quality that allows the text to summarise, even epitomise, the oracles of chs. 1–23 and to function as an archetype for YHWH's eternal plans. Isaiah 24–27 is a "hot spot" for the book's major theological themes—divine punishment of pride, the eschatological enthronement of YHWH, repatriation of his people, and trust in divine purposes for a new creation. As a theological reflection, Isa 24–27 interprets and simplifies historical and political complexities to present a unified vision of the reign of YHWH and to foster loyalty to YHWH and trust in his promises.

2. Conclusion

The challenge of the literary unity and compositional coherence of Isaiah 24–27 is by no means an isolated case in prophetic literature. This question remains a significant and difficult problem in prophetic studies generally. As scholars continue to explore the intertextual dynamics of Isaiah and other biblical texts, literary cohesion can provide another tool for discerning unity within composite texts. Whereas intertextual studies generally rely on exact verbal parallels (sometimes very tenuous ones), cohesion allows for a broader view of the interconnectedness of discourse. It has perhaps less explanatory value for literary dependence or authorial intent, but has

³⁶ Perhaps the closest literary parallel is Isa 34–35; cf. Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 271.

greater explanatory power for the readerly connections within and between texts. Literary cohesion allows for attending to coherence across "disjunctive" markers without depending on authorial unity. Robert Alter's statement about biblical narrative applies to poetic texts:

"The biblical writers and redactors . . . had certain notions of unity rather different from our own, and . . . the fullness of statement they aspired to achieve as writers in fact led them at times to violate what a later age and culture would be disposed to think of as canons of unity and logical coherence. The biblical text may be the whole cloth imagined by pre-modern Judeo-Christian tradition, but the confused textual patchwork that scholarship has often found to displace such earlier views may prove upon further scrutiny to be purposeful pattern."³⁷

³⁷ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 133.

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